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# The Princeton Theological Review

Spring 2005

## FOR RICHER SOIL AND STRONGER ROOT

*Assessing Seminary Education*

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# FOR RICHER SOIL AND STRONGER ROOT

“In that same Gardin all the goodly flowers,  
Wherewith dame Nature doth her beautifie,  
And decks the girlonds of her paramours,  
Are fetcht: there is the first seminarie  
Of all things, that are borne to live and die,  
According to their kindes. Long worke it were,  
Here to account the endless progenie  
Of all the weeds, that bud and blossom there;  
But so much as doth need, must needs be  
counted here.”

—Edmund Spenser, “The Faerie Queen,”  
III.vi.30 (1590)

Turning us back to the dawn of all things, Spenser casts a shining image of that first season of creation, envisioning the splendor of genesis and germination in the Garden. “There is the first seminarie,” he writes, the place from which the blossoming beauty of creation spreads to flourish among every corner of the earth. Long before the seminary was a training place for ministry, it was the seedbed of creation, the piece of ground where the blessings of the land were cultivated to abundance.

This year marks a new season for Princeton Theological Seminary. By the year’s end we will have witnessed the beginning of the tenure of a new president, the transition to a new academic dean, and the start of a major reassessment of the seminary’s curriculum. At such a point of transition, we would be wise to consider the origin of the professional designation of our institution, recalling that the word seminary derives from the Latin word *seminarium*, meaning “seedbed” or “breeding ground.” The seminary, distinct from our divinity school cousin, is unambiguously a “seedbed” of the church, a ground of cultivation and training for those who are called to serve as pastors and teachers in the Christian community. Just as the garden requires constant attention to the health of the seedlings, careful awareness of external destructive factors that may jeopardize growth, and continuous evaluation of the harvest that results from sowing and planting, so too the seedbed of the seminary requires constant attentiveness. The changes we are undergoing this year provide us with such an opportunity for re-cultivation and evaluation, a time for digging deep into long-neglected soil, for satiating cracked and desiccated earth, and for ensuring the possibility of flourishing life.

This issue of *The Princeton Theological Review* is a contribution to the ongoing conversation regarding

the health of not only this seminary but also the seminary as an institution that serves the church and trains its leaders. The three lead articles are written by individuals with extensive knowledge of educational theory and theological education, and who have had their own long seasons of helping to shape the contours and content of the seedbed. Ellen Charry discusses how the pursuit of wisdom, rooted in the love and knowledge of God, may find its way back to the theological heart of the seminary. Mark Gornik explores how the dramatic shift in the centers of global Christianity in the twentieth century has and must affect the way Western theological education is carried out. Ajit Prasadam brings an extensive knowledge of educational theory to the conversation, suggesting a model for the seminary that can lead to true liberation and transformation. From more personal dimensions, the series of reflections included in this issue are all written by students of this seminary. The book review, interview and finale further contribute to this theme.

The result of this combination of academic, public, and personal perspectives is a rich ground of possibility. Threads of commonality weave throughout many of these pieces; there are also sharp disagreements and seemingly irreconcilable propositions. But all of them reflect a deep commitment to see the seminary become a more fruitful, vitalizing, and flourishing place of cultivation that results in the health and vibrancy of the church. The criticism you will discover here is hedged in an unreserved affirmation of the place and responsibility of the seminary and of the way that it has shaped the theological life of its students, indeed the way it has deeply impacted all of us.

Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians, “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness” (9:10). Our paramount hope for this issue is that the seed that is sown will result in the righteousness of the people of God, the flourishing shalom of our diverse community, the germination of new seed that will produce abundant blessing for the world to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.



COREY WIDMER  
Executive Editor

# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE WISDOM OF GOD?

by Ellen T. Charry

Professional ministerial curricula are fragmented and dethologized. Professional theological school training programs must accommodate as many skills and disciplines as administrators think clinicians-in-training need to master. As the American churches became more programmatic and social service oriented, and less theological and devotionally oriented, theological schools added more skills training to the curriculum: administrative skills, performance skills, conflict resolution skills, counseling skills, schedule and financial management skills, and social skills head the list of things that ministers need to manage their churches and their lives. Some of the pressure in this direction came from the discovery that students no longer brought these skills with them. At the same time, financial pressures precluded extending the time devoted to this curriculum, so more and more was squeezed into the three-year framework.

Under management pressures, traditional studies of scripture, history, ethics, and theology appear as batches of information that students ought to be familiar with—at least minimally—but it may be difficult to integrate content with the practical challenges of running a meeting, raising money, handling personnel problems, and keeping the congregation together amidst dispute. Indeed, the congregation may be more competent to judge the management skills of their clergy than their grasp of and commitment to Christianity, and so the clergy may be more vulnerable to criticism on the management side of things than on the content side.

Further, within both the skills and content streams of the curriculum there may be internal competition and fragmentation. “Practical” theology struggles with method and the great theory-praxis dilemma, while the classical subject areas pursue their own arguments with one another and with various orientations within their several sub-specialties. Teachers cannot converse among themselves about what they do and why because they are “experts” in only a tiny piece of the curriculum and so faculty members cannot guide one another as teachers and scholars. Each faculty member pursues his or her craft alone because only experts within tiny ranges have the authority to be taken seriously.

The fact that faculty members cannot help one another extends to their students as well. Most theological curricula are set in a deconstructive and

competitive mode. Teachers may hope to deconstruct the naïve faith that many students bring with them, and to pursue their scholarly interests. Scholarship, following the competition-driven model of high medieval scholasticism, is to demonstrate one’s superior mastery of text, history, or correct doctrine and to find others faulty in some manner or other. Advancement within the academic guilds is not conducted in accordance with the dictates of Christian charity, and this is evident in the classroom. The curriculum is not designed to help students regroup theologically and spiritually after the texts and the doctrines have been critically examined. The proliferation of methods and approaches to subject matter within fields further pull students in different directions, but they often lack the background and critical thinking skills to assess what they receive.

Ministerial training is often approached like baking a cake. Necessary ingredients in certain measured amounts must be added together in a certain order and in a specified manner. Like a recipe, it is assumed that if one proceeds carefully and follows instructions, the cake will turn out well. The recipe approach substitutes education with training. In attending to the skills and information that students must acquire for professional success, the student becomes like a sieve or a coffee-grinder: a cipher into which material is poured in order to get a certain product on the other side. The problem is that the student (the oven, if we extend the cake-baking metaphor) is left out of account. The purpose is no longer to educate a person in the classical sense, but to train him or her to perform tasks efficiently and well. Faculty members think of themselves as teaching a subject matter rather than building up persons in their life with God, even if they trust that their subject is in that service.

Education in the sense of *paideia* or *Bildung* understands the teaching of subject matter to be for the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual maturity of the student. Its goal is to form fine citizens. In the Christian case, the goal should be to form fine Christians. Now skills training and information dissemination are not at all in tension with personal and spiritual formation, but are part and parcel of it. Education in the classic formational sense sees information and skills acquisition as a means of ennobling, civilizing, and leading people to become their best selves. Education is a moral and spiritual

undertaking. Christian education at whatever level should be no different.

Some will object that it is the responsibility of parents and local parishes to catechize and form the students before they arrive at theological school and not the responsibility of the theological school itself. This is not only unrealistic in today's climate, but a flawed way of thinking for two reasons. First, it appears to assume that Christian and personal formation can be complete at some point, rather than continuing throughout life. Second, and perhaps more tellingly, such a perspective reveals lack of confidence in the intent and ability of theological study itself to shape and lead students in salutary ways. If the subject matter of Christianity is not morally and spiritually healthful as one encounters it, what will ministers take with them to care for the souls put in their charge once they leave school? Skills must be in the service of delivering content. Indeed, in an age in which secular psychotherapy, program design, and technology reshape churches into entertainment centers and social and psychological service agencies, professional ministerial identity is crafted from any number of orientations as to what the purpose of ordained ministry is.

Now it should not be surprising that Christianity encourages moral and spiritual well-being. If students cannot undergo that personally in their own education, how will they affect it for their parishioners? Fortunately, a way forward is built deep into the core of the western theological tradition. St. Augustine of Hippo articulated his monumental vision of theology as knowledge seeking wisdom in his treatise on the Trinity. Sadly, the medieval tradition turned in another direction. In chapter 1 of his famous Proslogion, St Anselm of Canterbury wrote a wonderful plea to God for philosophical acumen. It concludes: "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand."<sup>1</sup> He took this theme from St. Augustine who believed, erroneously it turns out, that he was following Isaiah 7.<sup>2</sup>

That the task of theology is faith seeking understanding has come to be assumed rather uncritically, but it was never argued by either of these fathers. It goes without saying that Augustine insists that readers and hearers should understand their faith as best they can. But a stronger case can, I think, be made that his understanding of the task of formal theology is knowledge (of God) seeking wisdom (of God), and that the means to that wisdom is love. There is not space to make that argument here, but it flows throughout Augustine's corpus like the waves of the ocean.

There are many complex and interrelated reasons why knowledge seeking wisdom through love was eclipsed by faith seeking understanding. One of the more subtle ones is the modern notion of autonomy—the idea that we possess what we need to flourish morally and all that we lack is the courage to be ourselves.<sup>3</sup> The modern commitment to moral autonomy obviated the need for spiritual guidance to grow into maturity. Ironically the corporate nature of the modern church now requires management skills that call for more and more training, yet this idea of spiritual autonomy persists. It is generally accepted that perhaps at best we need spiritual guidance when we fall, but we do not need training in how to know, love, and enjoy God.

Further, when Romanticism advanced the Protestant interest in individuality it rendered impossible the guidance of one by another. Thus, maturing in wisdom became a task that one must

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engage in alone with God. Education is of no essential help to the soul, and so educational structures are easily co-opted for training. Secular psychotherapy exacerbates the problem when it construes its task as assisting clients toward self-fulfillment or self-actualization secularly construed apart from God.

Anselm himself distinguished reason from faith, and by the time of St. Thomas Aquinas, philosophy and theology were two separate academic disciplines, one based on principles derived from human thought, the other from divine revelation. These had to be integrated to yield truth. Monastic theology retained the older view but was drastically weakened by the Protestant Reformation that destroyed the monasteries.

The medieval scholastic tradition won the day in defining theology as a competitive academic discipline in the service of the authority of the Church. Slowly, from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, theology was transformed from the chief means of lifting the soul to know God and partake of his wisdom and

goodness, first into an instrument to control heresy and consolidate the power of the church, and eventually into a modern secular discipline of the secular research university where theology is an antiquarian interest.

Theological schools sit in an awkward place in this scheme. Their faculty members are trained in modern research institutions, yet their location in professional training programs suggests that the monastic commitment to learning as a way of life in God cannot quite be dismissed. Once Kant persuaded moderns that reason could not pursue God, theologians sought another task for their “discipline.” Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *Brief Outline for the Study of Theology* argued that the task of theology is to support churchmanship.<sup>4</sup> The unity of the theological disciplines is that they all strengthen and expand the church. This was essentially a refurbishing of the task of theology in the high Middle Ages in Protestant form. Theological studies are the mind of the Church for the sake of its intellectual well-being, whether understood in terms of the classical tradition or more contemporary ones.

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***When higher theological education turns its back on the theological and spiritual formation of Christians, it abandons our Augustinian inheritance: that the purpose of inquiring after God is to reorder our disordered loves and become more healthy and happy in pursuit of the best object or our affections.***

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The nineteenth century is often characterized by the phrase, “the turn to the subject,” meaning the inquirer rather than the object sought. Within theology this sometimes refers to the fact that Schleiermacher made the faith of the believer rather than God the focus of inquiry. Yet, just as momentously, he made church maintenance the theme of higher theological education, for it was the only unifying element within the theological curriculum that he could find.<sup>5</sup>

Here, in an unacceptably short compass, we see the demise of sapience as the purpose of education and the emergence of professional training paradigm for church maintenance and program development.<sup>6</sup> The task of seminary course requirements is not to lead students into the knowledge and love of God but to

success in church growth and maintenance—that is, in career preparation and advancement.

When higher theological education turns its back on the theological and spiritual formation of Christians, it abandons our Augustinian inheritance: that the purpose of inquiring after God is to reorder our disordered loves and become more healthy and happy in pursuit of the best object or our affections. For Augustine, exegesis of scripture and dogmatic reflection were to lift the soul to God. He was not interested in information for its own sake, but only to this practical eschatological end: eternal life with Christ. Sometimes that end required defeating wrong opinions that he believed would lead believers astray, not because orthodox doctrine had to be preserved for the sake of the power of Church, but because wrong theology is psychologically and socially harmful to individuals and society. It is bad for us rather than good for us as God is. Eventually, however, and there are hints of this in Augustine himself, the spiritual and psychological well-being of Christians became conflated with using theology in the service of the power of the church to impose itself legally and politically.

When they are not writing polemically, however, we see not only Augustine, but also most all of the Church Fathers hard at work ferrying their readers to the beauty and wisdom of God. This frequently comes through scripture commentary rather than in responses or treatises written in the throes of rancorous debate. So, for example, Origen of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin may appear to speak in two voices. When they comment on scripture they are spiritual guides. As respondents to doctrinal challenge, they are polemicists for orthodoxy. The two voices, however, do not mean that they were of two minds, or that one voice bespoke their true or stronger vocation. The fact that most of the great theologians of the church wrote both reactively and proactively is because as public representatives of the Church they were called to work on various fronts depending on the occasion. They were spiritual guides for those seeking to know, love, and enjoy God as fully as possible for the sake of a good and happy life, and they were, from time to time, called upon to defend the way that knowledge was presented and understood for the sake of those seekers.

Today the idea that seminary faculty should use their subject matter as a means to guide their students into the wisdom of God lies outside curricular possibilities and expectations. With knowledge now limited to information, and teaching to its impartation,

wisdom is no longer the province of theological masters. Indeed, wisdom has lost its epistemic home and is suspect. Further, with privacy the reigning modern norm, the idea that teachers could do more than impart information is viewed as invasive. We are no longer to teach one another in the sapiential sense, but at most inform another. To do more is to exhort or worse, indoctrinate, and that may not be with the best interests of the recipient in mind. Power again rears its ugly head. The only appropriate venue remaining for exhorting one another is the pulpit.

Of course, education of students in the sense suggested here does happen around the edges, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. But there is always the temptation that teachers will manipulate their students as pawns in the game of defeating colleagues who hold different positions on the subject matter, or simply to make disciples. In short, the transformation of theology into modern academic specialties was to put an end to theology as the Mothers and Fathers of the Church practiced it.

The argument here is that theological schools are not able to do theology as St. Augustine meant it to lead students from the impartation of information into the wisdom of God through love. This is a great loss, not only because it could integrate the theological curriculum, overcome the theory/practice divide, and retheologize theological studies, but also because it enables churches and their leadership to float free from the church's proper end: love of God and neighbor and into corporate management without remainder.

The point of this critique of the theological curriculum is to invite reflection on whether the skills and information that comprise the theological specialties may not be appropriated sapientially, first for the sake of the flourishing of the student, and then for the church and its service to society. The presupposition of criticizing the current curriculum is that knowledge is not an end in itself but for the apprehension of God's goodness and wisdom, that human flourishing may be directed toward enjoying participating in the divine life and service to the neighbor.

For teachers to converse about how their work together as teachers and scholars will best advance their own spiritual maturity and that of their students, or for students to appraise schools with an eye toward which faculty might best advance their growth in the knowledge and love of God, is beyond the purview of today's academic faculty and students. Aside from the history of theological studies that went in quite other directions, the main reason we can no longer carry our

students to God is that according to modern critical standards, we cannot know God. With the linguistic turn we are unsure what knowledge is at all, and we certainly have no grasp of goodness, beauty or wisdom, for all of these seem to have dissipated into power without remainder.

To speak to one another and to our students of knowing and loving God is to flout the standards of modern critical knowledge into which we were trained in graduate school. Talk of retrieving theology as knowledge seeking the wisdom of God through love reveals the great conundrum at the heart of ministerial training. If the ministry is to help people in their life with God, and not simply to maintain institutional structures, we are being asked to do something that our academic training tells us is both impossible and misdirected.

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The problem we have identified is epistemological. Theological teachers cannot guide students in the art of leading people to God and the things of God if such knowledge is fraudulent or at best unreliable, as modernity taught. A constructive path beyond the impasse of both modern skepticism and post-modern cynicism would require a post-critical sapiential epistemology constituted by the ancient transcendentals. Such a vision of knowledge would provide a fresh orientation to the goodness, beauty, and wisdom of knowledge and truth.<sup>7</sup> It would be a vision that recognizes the moral, psychological, communal, and personal dimensions of knowledge of every sort, including knowledge of God.

The possibility of gleaning wisdom from information presented by the modern disciplines is an alluring possibility. That we might be spiritually, socially, psychologically, and even politically cured by knowing God through the Church's texts, decisions,

and even its ambiguous attempts at guidance requires an immense amount of trust that the Holy Spirit is yet at work mediating the truth through the skills and information that we scholars offer up as our perhaps singularly odd form of worship and praise.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Proslogion, in *The prayers and meditations of Saint Anselm with the Prosologion*. E.T. Sr. Benedicta Ward, S. L. G. (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 244.

<sup>2</sup> André Muller has pointed out that Augustine's Old Latin text had mistranslated the LXX. "Augustine's *De Trinitate*

1-4: Reading Trinitarian Theology as if for Life" (master's thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2004), 52.

<sup>3</sup> J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*, Translated by Terrence N. Tice (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, § 6.

<sup>6</sup> The best presentation of this problem is Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Linda Zagzebski is working in this direction. See her book, *Virtues of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

# NEW CENTERS OF SCHOLARSHIP:

## Andrew Walls on World Christianity and Theological Education

### by Mark R. Gornik

Over the course of the past century, two monumental changes have taken place that must be considered transformational for theological education. First, the world moved from being a global village to a global city, and second, the center of Christian gravity shifted from Europe and North America to the global south and east. In this essay, I will consider the later trend as it impacts on theological education, and to do so, I will engage the work of Andrew F. Walls.

Andrew Walls is one of the most esteemed interpreters of world Christianity and its missionary role in our time. His life's body of work reveals a passion for scholarship, a commitment to reading the church in all its cultural contexts, and a comprehensive understanding of the Christian gospel. The relevance of Walls' ideas spans multiple disciplines, and the challenges he directs us to consider are theological, historical, spiritual, and missiological.

Of interest in this essay is the challenge Walls presents to theological learning. In a seminal essay titled "Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church,"<sup>1</sup> the key idea is found in the first sentence. "Christian scholarship follows Christian mission and derives from Christian mission."<sup>2</sup> If this dynamic of theological learning is central, then today it belongs to a larger story of the church's development from Christendom to a polycentric Christianity. In what follows, I will first introduce the life of Andrew Walls, then review the cross-cultural story that is central to his way of reading Christianity, connect this story to current demographic realities, and then turn to an exploration of the implications for theological learning. Following how he makes his argument is at least as important as identifying the conclusions Walls reaches. Overall, we will see that Walls presents a paradigm challenge to theological learning for an age of world Christianity.

#### **Shaped by Africa**

To begin to understand Walls' arguments on theological education, some biographical background may prove helpful.<sup>3</sup> Andrew Walls was born a Scot in "exile" in New Milton, England in 1928. He attended Oxford University, where he took a BA (1948) a MA (1952), and a BLitt (1954). During his time at Oxford, he was a student of both theology and church history, and focused his graduate work on Patristic studies,

studying with F. L. Cross. After serving in the dual roles of the Secretary and Librarian of Tyndale House, located in Cambridge, in 1957 Walls moved to Sierra Leone, where he became a Lecturer in Theology at Fourah Bay College, which at that time provided both a university education and ministerial training. Then in 1962 he became the head of the Department of Religion at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

While teaching in Africa, Walls witnessed the growth of African initiated and directed Christianity. Alongside new Christian developments in Asia and Latin America, and indications of Christian recession in Europe, he began to speak of a historic shift in the center of Christian gravity. Coming out of this grassroots experience Walls saw that many of the pressing pastoral and theological issues of Africa, such as the matter of culture and identity, had analogues in church history. This context of expansion and theological activity in African Christianity would influence the course of his life and work.

Returning to Scotland in 1966, Walls began teaching at the University of Aberdeen, and in 1982 founded the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (CSCNWW). Beginning in 1986, Walls and the CSCNWW found a home at the University of Edinburgh. The CSCNWW represents Walls' commitment to intercultural learning, scholarly collaboration, and the research of world Christianity. Following retirement from Edinburgh, Walls has held a number of distinguished academic posts, including, from 1997 to 2001, guest Professor of Ecumenics and Mission Research at Princeton Theological Seminary. Maintaining an extraordinary travel and lecture schedule that makes Walls the Steve Fossett of world Christian studies, it has been joked that perhaps he is in need of a sabbatical during his (most recent) retirement. However, he is simply being true to his self-understanding of the vocation of a lay Methodist preacher, a role he has faithfully held for over fifty years.

Walls is primarily a writer of essays, and presently two volumes, both published by Orbis Books, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (1996) and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (2002).

collect some of his most important writings. A third collection on the subject of conversion is expected.

### Crossing Cultural Frontiers

Having said something about the personal story of Walls, the context of his scholarship and institution building, I now turn to explore some of his ideas on theological education. But this discussion must begin with attending to some of his most basic views on Christian faith.

Christianity, Walls argues, is the story of the gospel constantly crossing cultural frontiers and being translated into the thought processes and life of a new culture. Theology is not about abandoning or undoing the past, but rather discovering new layers of Christian understanding, the result of cross-cultural diffusion or interaction.<sup>4</sup> Clearly this is a creative and risky way of viewing theology, but as Walls argues, it is simply a consequence of Christianity encountering new life situations, new cultural materials, and new issues related to Christian witness. Put another way, the embrace of Christian faith in a new context is not prepackaged, but must become a way of life in terms defined by and understood by the new culture. To do

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this, it must enter into local categories of thought and life, turning what is present toward Christ. As translation, Christianity is always a prisoner and liberator of culture.<sup>5</sup> Seen this way, mission is the lifeblood of the church and theology.

This approach begins for Walls in the New Testament. In particular, he offers a reading of Acts that brings out its cultural and missional dimensions.<sup>6</sup> The early church in Jerusalem, as Acts 2 and 4 emphasize, focused on life together as the community of Jesus. It is only with the death of Stephen in chapter 7, the resulting persecution of the church, and then the dispersion of believers to Antioch that mission came to the fore. As a result of cross-cultural

contact in Antioch, Gentiles began to believe in the story of Jesus, resulting in the term “Christians,” a new word to describe Jewish and Gentile believers. But in this a critical issue arose: Would Gentile Christians follow Christ in Jewish cultural terms, or would Christianity find a home in Hellenistic culture?

The mission to the Gentiles, brought about by migration, sets the stage for the meeting of the church in Jerusalem, as recounted in Acts 15. Walls sees great power in their conclusions. “Finally, after deep deliberation, the leaders of the Jerusalem community (swayed, in the Acts account, not by Paul’s torrid eloquence but by the measured judgments of the seniors who had known Paul the best, Peter and James the Just) accepted the essentials of Paul’s argument. Though circumcised, Torah-keeping Jews themselves, they recognized that Gentile believers in the Messiah could enter Israel without becoming Jews. They were converts not proselytes.”<sup>7</sup> Christian life and thought would indeed make its way into Hellenistic culture. From this, Walls concludes “It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of this early controversy and its outcome; it is a pivot on which Christian history turns...” for it “built the principle of cultural diversity into Christianity in perpetuity.”<sup>8</sup>

If the first cultural frontier crossed was between Israel and the Hellenistic world in Acts, Walls often points to other figures in this story, among them the apostle Paul, Justin and especially Origen. Through such examples, he opens vistas to see how the cross-cultural diffusion of the gospel through mission acts as a continual source of theological life and activity. If there is a *telos* to this process, it comes through the maturation of the body of Christ and an expanded understanding of Christ. Pertinent here are Walls’ explorations of the message and implications of Ephesians, and particularly its concentration on reconciliation and growth in the fullness of Christ.

Because Christianity is cross-cultural, by definition the theological process is not static or mono-cultural, but vibrantly local, global and inter-cultural. This does not mean that universal elements are not present across all cultures where Christianity is present, but rather that mission always leads to diversity. Here Walls speaks firmly of “diversity and coherence.”<sup>9</sup> But the critical question remains, however, what does this mission dynamic of theology mean for our time? Perhaps the answer lies in a second question: where will this take place?

## Demographic Changes and Emergent Theological Demands

Following more than fifty years of association with the western academy, Walls has serious reservations about its current state. "Our universities are coming into bondage to Mammon, and the altars of Mammon are more sanguinary than those of Moloch."<sup>10</sup> His concern is that competition, individualism, career emphasis have replaced the promotion of learning. In this climate, Walls calls for "a cleansing of theological scholarship, a reorientation of academic theology to Christian mission, a return of the ideal of Christian scholarship for the glory of God, a return to the ideal of academic life as a liberating search for truth."<sup>11</sup>

For the future of theological development, Walls looks to the non-western world. As he has long observed, the church is undergoing a demographic shift, with the new heartlands of Christian adherence in the south and east. Therefore, "The primary responsibility for the determinative theological scholarship of the twenty-first century will lie with the Christian communities of Africa, Asia and Latin America."<sup>12</sup> Here in the new heartlands, where the people and critical life issues are, is where theological leadership is required.

Yet the responsibility for renewed scholarship is not completed with the shifting of numerical adherence. "Africa stands in need of Origens, of people who, brought up in the Christian faith, rooted in the Christian Scriptures, are certain of their Christian identity and yet confident enough to handle the African past as Christians and as Africans."<sup>13</sup> Similar proposals might be sounded for Asia and Latin America, although in line with Walls' line of argument about the relationship between theology, mission and culture, each setting requires attention to its own concerns and needs.<sup>14</sup>

## Curriculum, Ashrams, and Ingredients of Christian Scholarship

What the west has not comprehended, Walls suggests, is the highly contextual nature of its own theology and curriculum. Here the Enlightenment is the shaping force. This means much of western theology simply misses entirely the life and death theological concerns of the non-western world.<sup>15</sup> Given the western academy's ongoing academic influence, this is regrettable. "Generally speaking, the theological curricula across Africa and Asia have followed Western models, simply making some additions for local relevance. But Western curricula in church history, for instance, do not present some

universal model; they reflect a careful process of selection that makes the West the special focus of the church's life. And biblical studies are dominated by the results of a chapter of Western intellectual history, and essentially by Enlightenment methods."<sup>16</sup> Moving beyond the western centrism of "some additions for local relevance" will require hard work as diverse life-worlds are engaged. But when this occurs, the results are not only for the non-western world, but can also renew the western church and its theology.

Establishing supportive learning communities for the challenges of world Christianity is equally important. The model Walls most often cites is the ashram of India.

The ashram was, and is, a community of people living a simple life of worship and study together. Some Christian ashrams have already come into being specially for this scholarly purpose- there are splendid examples in various parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. But equally the Christian ashram could arise in a preexisting institution (a seminary or a university department, for instance) if it maintains the devout spirit, cooperative fellowship, and the research climate.<sup>17</sup>

Here in the Christian ashram is where research, theological leadership, and spiritual formation can occur. Crucially, such a vision makes direct connection of the church's mission and emergent pastoral responsibilities. Overall, this model is a contrast to the expensive ivory-tower approach of the west.<sup>18</sup>

For the "theological revolution" in learning that is required, Walls offers a list of ingredients for Christian scholarship in an age of world Christianity.<sup>19</sup> The eight elements of this wonderful list are 1) a renewal of the sense of Christian vocation to scholarship, with the anchoring of Christian scholarship in mission, 2) a research climate, 3) exacting standards 4) collegial

***Because Christianity is cross-cultural, by definition the theological process is not static or mono-cultural, but vibrantly local, global and inter-cultural.***

attitudes, 5) pioneering Spirit, 6) dual education (biblical/Christian material and local society/culture), 7) a catholic approach to knowledge, and 8) a lively interactive sense of world Christianity. Such ingredients return us to the need for appropriate institutional settings. Given the powerful challenge

Walls presents in this list, what are the concrete avenues for renewing theological education?

The mix of necessary ingredients for theological learning, Walls suggests, can find expression in either a preexisting institutional setting or in establishing new models. Both, it seems to me, are necessary. At City Seminary of New York, recently seeded in New York City, the influence of Walls is present in the conceptualization of the learning process. While the mission of City Seminary of New York is to seek the peace of the city through the formation of women and men for faithful Christian ministry in urban context, the underlying process involves building an intercultural learning community for the study of scripture, applied theology, pastoral work and mission. Given the presence of the world Christian community in a globalizing New York, early results suggest that the possibilities for learning are profound.

### Conclusion

Much more, of course, needs to be said about the challenge of theological education in Africa, Asia and Latin America contexts. What Walls gives us is a broad theological and historical paradigm for our new moment. This begins, for Walls, with a conviction that mission and theology are the living dynamic of a vibrant Christianity. Theology takes place where the people of God are, and this has shifted southward. New centers of Christian faith, the result of the missionary dynamic of Christianity, require theological scholarship for its very life. Therefore, the new heartlands of Christianity are the cutting edge for theology in the twenty-first century. The body known as the church, marked by "mutual possession" in Christ, directs us to inter-cultural learning, an activity that culminates in "the fullness of Christ's stature achieved."

The last word, perhaps best heard as a word of invitation, belongs to Walls. "There has never been such a call for devout minds with a mastery of Scripture, an awareness of earlier Christian thinking, and as confident an apprehension of the cultural traditions and realities of life of the southern continents as was once brought to those of Hellenistic Roman civilization."<sup>20</sup>

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Professor Walls at PTS, an opportunity for which he is forever grateful!



### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Andrew F. Walls, "Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church" in *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Rodney L. Peterson with Nancy M. Rourke (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2002), 166-183. A slightly different version was published earlier in "Christian Scholarship in Africa in the Twenty-first Century," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 4 (December 2001): 44-52

<sup>2</sup> "Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church," 166

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller biographical picture, see Mark R. Gornik, "Andrew Walls and the Transformation of Christianity" in *Catalyst* (March 2005). A portion of the material in this section is also found there.

<sup>4</sup> This view of theology is addressed throughout his writings, and a recent reflection is found in his unpublished lecture "The Great Commission 1910-2010," available at <http://www.towards2010.org.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> "The Gospel and Prisoner and Liberator of Culture" appears in Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 3-15.

<sup>6</sup> Walls references Acts in numerous essays. For one recent account, see "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28 (January 2004): 2-6.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew F. Walls, "Old Athens and New Jerusalem: Some Signposts for Christian Scholarship in the Early History of Mission Studies," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21 (October 1997), 147.

<sup>8</sup> Old Athens, p. 148

<sup>9</sup> *The Missionary Movement*, 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew F. Walls, "Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church," 175.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>14</sup> The proposals of Moonjang Lee and Kwame Bediako are significant in this regard.

<sup>15</sup> "Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological Scholarship in Africa," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 3 (June 2000), 2.

<sup>16</sup> "Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church," 181.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>18</sup> "Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological Scholarship in Africa," 4.

<sup>19</sup> "Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church," 181-183.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-181.

## MODELS OF EDUCATION:

### Socialization and Transformation in Seminary Education

by Ajit Prasadam

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me  
To bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To let the oppressed go free.  
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Luke 4:17-21

Educational institutions are microcosms of the social world in which they are placed. In turn they reproduce that world. At the macro level, socialization and enculturation take place through family patterns, educational institutions, social structures, and cultural patterns. All educational systems perpetuate cultural patterns, social structures, and lifestyles of a society. Thus, no education is neutral. Seminary education seeks to prepare Christian leaders whose lives and ministries strive to be in conformity with the Divine-human pattern of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Seminary education, so perceived, usually conflicts with educational systems that perpetuate the world as is. Therefore in this essay, I will first clarify the conflict between seminary education and education in general, framed in terms of socialization and transformation. Second, I will present a typology of models of education and the lifestyles<sup>1</sup> they encourage. Third, I will discuss in some depth two of the models of education: (i) a liberation model, by way of Paulo Freire<sup>2</sup> and M.K. Gandhi;<sup>3</sup> and (ii) a transformation model by way of James E. Loder;<sup>4</sup> and draw implications from them for seminary education.<sup>5</sup>

#### Education: Socialization and Transformation

As we study the dynamics of education in general and theological education in particular, we realize that they are in some form of contradiction. Education generally seeks to socialize persons into the socio-cultural milieu; but theological education seeks to transform persons, societies, and cultures in conformity to the hidden orders of reality disclosed in Jesus Christ. When I say that education socializes persons into the socio-cultural milieu I do not discount creativity in education that advances the frontiers of knowledge and impacts the world in various ways. But I do mean that despite creativity the overriding tendency is always in the direction of socialization.

Socialization is commonly understood as the process by which a society or a culture brings new

members into itself. It is the means by which it teaches habits and values and how it measures success and failure. Socialization is interactive between persons and their human environment. Its purpose is to keep that environment in equilibrium; it is a "tension-reduction pattern-maintenance process designed to serve the purposes of adaptation and incorporation into the larger and more complex social milieu."<sup>6</sup> So, it is easy to see how education could be a tool for socialization.

Theological education on the other hand seeks to develop Christian leaders whose lives and ministries (understood individually and corporately) are patterned after the Divine-human Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. So, theological education seeks to be transformative. Transformation is "the patterned process whereby within any given framework of knowledge or experience, a hidden order of meaning emerges with the power to redefine and/or reconstruct the original frame of reference."<sup>7</sup> The process of transformation uncovers those hidden orders of meaning. While socialization seeks to maintain equilibrium and the status quo, transformation disrupts the status quo to reorder reality, disclose the hidden orders and bring deep change. Both transformation and socialization are at work in all the fields of human action—personal, social, and cultural.

The concern in theological education is to intentionally encourage transformation as the dominant force in the transformation-socialization relationality.<sup>8</sup> The transforming power of the Holy Spirit moves us toward deep change, gives us a new identity and re-creates every aspect of human action, patterned after the Divine-human Jesus Christ. When transformation is the dominant force "...the Holy Spirit works within conflict to disclose new insights, releasing the creative energy of the human spirit, and firing us back into the world as bearers of a redeemed creation."<sup>9</sup>

#### Models of Education and Lifestyles

In this section I will present six metaphors that capture educational models and curriculums that are representative ways in which education is practiced in an institution or in an educational system. It appears that one or two models are dominant in a given

culture. For example, my study of educational models, in surveys done between 1995 and 2000 with over 500 teachers in India, showed that the banking and machine metaphors best capture the general trend. Like all ideal types there are limitations in these models to fit approaches being followed in a particular institution or system of education. But they do provide a way to analytically discuss a given educational situation and diagnose the dynamics and implications of the approaches being followed.

The six metaphors<sup>10</sup> are (i) machine, a metaphor of production; (ii) organism, a metaphor of growth; (iii) creative, a metaphor of travel; (iv) transformation, icon or window metaphor<sup>11</sup> for encounters with God; (v) domestication, a metaphor of banking; and (vi) humanization, what I call the lock-and-key metaphor for freedom, which Freire described as problem-posing education; an alternative to the banking method.<sup>12</sup>

In the *machine metaphor of production*, the curriculum is a means of production, the student the raw material, and the teacher a highly skilled technician. The outcome is meticulously plotted with minimum wastage of the raw material in the process of the desired object or product. This approach correlates with the authoritarian lifestyle, as it encourages repression of the student's thinking and submission to the teacher.

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***Education generally seeks to socialize persons into the socio-cultural milieu; but theological education seeks to transform persons, societies, and cultures in conformity to the hidden orders of reality disclosed in Jesus Christ.***

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The *authoritarian* is preoccupied with power, control, and strength. Authoritarianism seeks power in two ways: either one is in power, or submits to those in power, in order to share in their power. Frustrations in such relationships flow downwards in the hierarchy. Those not in conformity with the authoritarian and his/her ideology and structures are placed in the out-group and ostracized. Inner life and feelings are repressed and suppressed. Authoritarians are given to stereotyping, superstition, and domination out of fear of losing control. S/he shares a perception of a world in which evil predominates, even when the evil is not there. Authoritarianism is encouraged as a lifestyle in society at many levels: at home through unpredictable

parental behavior, in school through excessive discipline that inhibits freedom and creativity, and through society in jobs that encourage authoritarianism like the military, police, and so on.<sup>13</sup>

In the *organism or growth metaphor* the curriculum is the greenhouse, students the plants and the teacher the wise and patient gardener. Each student, like a plant, is nurtured to grow according to her/his potential and not according to the whims and wishes of the teacher. The result is the blossoming of students and appreciation by the teacher for the student's "doing" (results) rather than the "being" of the student. This approach correlates with the achievement-oriented lifestyle as it encourages goal orientation and working for rewards.

The *achievement-oriented* person longs for the recognition that comes from achievement. S/he lacks a sense of ascriptive worth—a sense that one is of value simply because one exists. S/he performs tasks to reach goals or to earn his or her love. Achievement is rewarded in our society whether at home (hugs and kisses for something well done), at school (the grading system), and at work (promotions). On the positive side s/he is purposeful, organized and plans ahead. On the negative side s/he might be tense, domineering and cruel. At work s/he tends to stamp over others in order to reach his/her goals, no matter who is hurt in the process. At home s/he is obsessed with work at the expense of family welfare, neglecting spouse and children, and the nurturing needed in the whole family to grow in love and respect for one another and for the wider community.<sup>14</sup>

In the *creative metaphor of travel* the curriculum is the route the students are to travel under the guidance of an experienced companion the teacher. Each traveler is affected differently by such a journey. The variability of experiences and responses are applauded. No effort is made to affect the traveler in a specific way but great effort is put into plotting a rich, fascinating and memorable journey. This approach correlates with the *protean lifestyle* as it encourages pluralism and choice and thereby indirectly delays identity formation, and results in a perpetual identity crisis.

The word "protean" comes from the name of the Greek god Proteus who continually changed his shape and nature from wild boar to lion, to fire, to blood—all to avoid his proper function which was to prophesy. Thus, the word protean has been employed to describe one in a perpetual identity crisis, the self in process. The person has no clarity of who s/he is and thus keeps wearing many masks and tries several roles. There is no sense of rootedness. The three reasons for

the protean lifestyle are nuclearism, a mentality created after Hiroshima; psycho-historical dislocation, from industrialization and rapid technological changes; and the flooding of images in society through the media.

The person lacks inner stability evident in a constant shift in personal and professional identity. Constant moving from one job to another or one profession to another generates instability and a deep ideological hunger and cynicism. The person longs for nurture but rejects commitment. This phenomenon is seen in divorce as a norm in western society. There is a vague sense of guilt, which is transposed to moral confusion and indifference to society. There is a lack of conscience as children grow up without clear boundaries between generations and limits to their social conduct and behavior. The metaphor of dying and rising captures their sense of self in process through life. In sum, the destructive dimension is the inadequate working of the super ego.<sup>15</sup>

In the *banking metaphor*, the curriculum, designed by experts, are the deposits handed to the students, the banks, who passively receive them and meaninglessly return the deposits in examinations, to be certified to receive further deposits. This model correlates with the oppressed lifestyle, as the students are not encouraged to do critical reflection and to create and recreate their lived world, resulting in inability to name reality and take imaginative steps to emancipate self and others from oppression.

The core characteristics of *the oppressed* are low self-esteem and unrealistic dreams and aspirations. This causes anxiety, over-cautiousness, and an apologetic manner because of a vague sense that their goals are unrealistic. Oppressed persons have feelings of anger and aggression to those in authority but unconsciously repress their aggression and even deny it. Repression is the cause of years of ostracism; being placed in the out-group in the hierarchical system; being forced to live on the margins; and being exploited. As a result the oppressed become passive, fatalistic, and accept the status quo.

The self-destructive dimensions of such a lifestyle is the lack of consciousness of the oppression and oppressed state; inability to imagine ways out of problem situations; and lack of responsibility for one's life, by not taking initiative for liberation. There are three kinds of people in the world—those who do not know what is happening, and are unable to name reality; those who know what is happening but do nothing about it; and those who make history.<sup>16</sup> The oppressed belong to the first category.

Family patterns that generate oppression arise from a chronic realization that one will never achieve, will always be in the out-group, among the disinherit ed and the powerless and are resigned to one's fate. This is the cause for low self-esteem. The larger socio-political and economic environment perpetuates oppression through policies that keep segments of society in the out-group. Culturally, racism, casteism, classicism, ageism, and so on, legitimize these structures.<sup>17</sup>

In the *lock-and-key metaphor*, the curriculum designed by student-teachers and teacher-students arise out of concrete, historical situations. The curriculum is developed on the lines of problem-posing education that thrives on dialogue between student-teachers and teacher-students to find out the causes for their being in fetters and the discovery of the keys that will help unlock their fetters. This model co-relates with the emergence from oppression to freedom and responsible participation in history.

Emancipatory, non-violent movements starting with M. K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Romero, among others, show that important changes are brought about through such movements in all areas of human action. Structural changes that create a new ethos might lead one from, say, oppressed lifestyle to an achievement-oriented lifestyle. But such changes might not bring healing to the human spirit, that is, address the destructive dimensions of a lifestyle.

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***Freire showed how to undo the binds implicit in the structures of oppression through a problem-posing and dialogical approach to education.***

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The *iconic or window metaphor* encourages students to experience an encounter with the Divine in and through the study of scripture, sacred literature, and nature. The process of embracing conflicts, indwelling them and imaginative insights are encouraged. Thereby the concerns of the lock-and-key model are incorporated in the window model. The bestowal of gracious insights by God is anticipated but their exact nature is not determined. The iconic or window model recognizes that God's self-disclosure is congruent with God's past self-revelations. This approach correlates with the *Christian lifestyle*, sacrificial love given with integrity, fellowship in the Spirit, and the search for ultimate intelligibility that

holds all things together in Jesus Christ. The encounter with God leads to the possibility of transformation of persons, cultures, and societies.

The first four models perpetuate the dominant lifestyles of a culture. For example, the Ivy League schools reinforce the achievement-oriented lifestyle; educational institutions in totalitarian regimes reinforce authoritarianism; and in many developing countries the banking approach to education domesticates a majority of the population. Thus socialization is a dominant force in the first four models. One can learn from the growth and the travel models without adopting the destructive aspects, for example: encouraging unhealthy competition, reinforcing achievement-orientation at the cost of not ministering to the deeper need for intrinsic worth, or encouraging a sense of pluralism without calling for commitment to specific values.

The lock-and-key and window models are explicitly transformational. In the remaining part of this essay, I will turn to a discussion of Freire's and Gandhi's models for liberation and Loder's model for transformation; and draw some implications for seminary education.

### **Education for Liberation: From Fetters to Freedom**

M.K. Gandhi and Paulo Freire are generative thinkers in education for emancipation. The relevance of the methods of Freire and Gandhi for seminaries in western societies lies in their critical dialogical reflection on concrete historical realities and action for humanization. Richard Shaull<sup>18</sup> writes,

... a word of witness has its place here—a personal witness as to why I find a dialogue with the thought of Paulo Freire an exciting adventure. Fed up as I am with the abstractness and sterility of so much intellectual work in academic circles today, I am excited by a process of reflection which is set in a thoroughly historical context, which is carried on in the midst of a struggle to create a new social order and thus represents a new unity of theory and praxis.<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi's method of nonviolent action guided by *Satyagraha*,<sup>20</sup> *Ahimsa*<sup>21</sup> and *Sarvodaya*<sup>22</sup> for *Swaraj*, freedom or self-rule, is as relevant today as in Gandhi's day as violence has not abated in the world where people still cry for freedom, dignity, and equality.<sup>23</sup> Freire's method of "conscientization" will be compared with Gandhi's method of nonviolent resistance to show the importance of bringing the two into dialogue for emancipatory work.

Paulo Freire, more than any other educator, has shown how a group that is submerged in a "culture of

silence" can come out of the dynamics of oppression by cultivating critical consciousness through a literacy program. He called this process conscientization, which "... refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality".<sup>24</sup> Freire showed how to undo the binds implicit in the structures of oppression through a problem-posing and dialogical approach to education. I like to call it the lock and key approach as it seeks to free people by raising their consciousness through critical reflection on the causes of their misery and oppression. This approach stands in contrast to the banking approach that domesticates people into existing socio-cultural worlds.

Freire's literacy program<sup>25</sup> with migrant workers: (1) gave them a sense of initiative with language. It gave them a sense of selfhood and power;<sup>26</sup> and (2) resulted in their doing something about their situation to create a new social order. They would often enthusiastically say, "What shall we do?" They were starting to realize their "ontological vocation"—to name and create their own world. According to Paulo Freire this vocation depends on a person's ability to problematize—to name the problem in their existence and determine corporate agreement, "What shall we do?"<sup>27</sup> This approach fosters unity for liberation, organization, and cultural synthesis to counter the moves of dominants to divide and rule, manipulate and invade culturally, and liberates self and others from the fetters that dehumanize them.<sup>28</sup>

This is only the first step in freeing the human spirit. When the oppressed are able to name reality—the social, political and economic, and the contradictions that keep them in oppression—the underlying aggression from the unconscious is released, which may be too strong and more violent than the original oppressor.<sup>29</sup> Revolutions around the world are cases in point. In his experiments with "peasants" in Brazil, he says, he could not go far in his work, as he did not have enough understanding of how his educational activity would impact the direction the revolution would take. He did not know how to avoid the consequences of revolution "where the revolutions devour their children."<sup>30</sup>

The Gandhian movement of nonviolence was based on the principles of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa*. Truthful action was governed by the readiness to get hurt by others and yet not hurt them. Gandhi trained people to love, respect, understand, accept, and appreciate all including the oppressors. Nonviolent action was grounded in a lifestyle of meditation and prayer.<sup>31</sup> Gandhi's principles seek to deal with

aggression and to put anger into compassionate and creative action through *Sarvodaya*, the welfare of all through loving service. So, he not only taught people to be assertive and to confront lovingly, he motivated people to go beyond in a mission to build the community and the nation and seek the welfare of people across boundaries. This experiment was largely successful but the violence of the 1947 Partition of India and its aftermath show that all had not taken to heart his message of nonviolence.

Gandhi's method helped to lead a nonviolent revolution, but literacy and education that transform persons and communities were not part of the freedom movement. He used common symbols and strategic actions to dramatize the injustices perpetrated by the oppressors. So, latent conflicts were brought into the open calling for resolution. Gandhi's method needs to be wedded to Freire's method of conscientization. In this way one will be able to answer the question, How can one help raise the consciousness of people so that together "we" are able to name oppression and develop imaginative bases to negotiate the realities of life? Furthermore, how can one take cultural action for liberation from oppression without latent anger becoming destructive?

In sum, Freire's and Gandhi's methods of conscientization and nonviolent action for freedom are as relevant to the West as for other parts of the world as injustice and violence continue unabated. Reality needs to be unmasked and oppressive social orders transformed through critical reflection and nonviolent action.

### Beyond Conscientization: Windows to Encounter

In this section, I will highlight the dimensions, dynamics, direction, and discernment of transformational education as envisioned by James E. Loder, within an overall framework of spiritual theology. Classical spiritual theology's understanding of journey toward God in awakening, purgation, illumination, and unification through the *Lectio Divina*, the reading aloud of scripture, meditation, prayer and contemplation, finds a deep correlation with the logic of transformation. Thus, transformational education is iconic when scripture, divine readings, and nature are indwelt with a view to encounter the Holy. Encounters with the Holy send one back into the world of action "with a velocity not one's own."<sup>32</sup> The iconic or window approach to education incorporates the concern for critical reflection of concrete reality and seeks to address the latent anger which is released through the process of conscientization by contextualizing the process in worship.

The dynamic of the Divine intersecting the human plane alters the understanding of reality. In the discussion on socialization, reality is implicit in the three dimensional world that we create in our interaction with the environment and the void experienced, for example, in loneliness, meaninglessness, and death. With the Divine intersecting the human plane, the dimensions of reality are fourfold: self, lived world, void, and the Holy, summarized below.<sup>33</sup>

1. The self has four aspects:
  - a) Reflective awareness is the source of freedom, choice, and belief.
  - b) Conscience is felt as the integrity of selfhood.
  - c) Imagination is the intuitive aspect of self that helps to fantasize, and understand things tacitly, even before one can express verbally or explicitly. Imagination helps tacitly to indwell reality and gain insights into life and reality with intuitive force.
  - d) The spirit is inherently relational, transformational, self-transcending, and the dynamic basis for choice. The spirit is groundless. The self is truly self when it is grounded transparently in the Spiritual Presence of Christ.<sup>34</sup>
2. *The lived world* is the second dimension of human existence and it designates the universal human tendency to create and compose one's external realities into a coherent and livable whole.
3. *The void* is the third basic dimension of human existence. It is the irrevocable drift toward emptiness in human existence, experienced from birth to death in the many faces of loneliness, meaninglessness, despair, and death.
4. *The Holy* is the fourth dimension of human existence and refers to God who is separate from the world, the human, and the profane, and has the quality to draw and at the same time terrify. Mystery is an aspect of the Holy. The Holy, when brought into interaction with the three-dimensional reality of the self, the lived world, and the void, has the power to transform the above three dimensions. The Holy has a Christocentric focus and is the basis for Trinitarian understanding in Loder. The Holy finds concrete expression in the Christ-event. Through the Christ-event sin and evil are negated and life is bestowed on us through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, the Christ-event has not exhausted the mystery of the Holy.

In the three-dimensional world we allow ourselves to be socialized (adapting, adjusting, and finding ways to reduce tension). And in a four dimensional world one is constantly challenged by the hidden orders of reality disclosed in Jesus Christ.

### Logic of Transformation

The work of the Holy Spirit as the Creator Spirit is to transform human spirit after the Divine-human pattern of Jesus Christ. There is an analogy between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit. The similarity lies in the relational and self-relatedness of the Holy Spirit and human spirit, and in the transformational pattern as it operates through time and in creativity.<sup>35</sup> The dissimilarity lies in that the human spirit is grounded in the human psyche but the Holy Spirit is grounded in God.<sup>36</sup>

The logic of transformation is based on the disclosure model of knowing.<sup>37</sup> In other words, as we indwell the object to be known within its context, it discloses itself.<sup>38</sup> Loder refines discovery knowing into

### Celebrate learning, thus making study a joyful activity.

five movements. He illustrates it using the classic story of Archimedes and Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. I will refer only to Archimedes in the following discussion on the logic of transformation.

1. *Conflict-in-context* is a problem or conflict a person grapples with to find coherence, in a given frame of reference. The conflict-in-context in the example of Archimedes was the problem posed by King Hero of Syracuse who asked Archimedes to find the genuineness of the gold in his crown without melting it.
2. *Interlude for scanning*. Once the conflict is engaged, the spirit consciously or unconsciously seeks resolution. It scans for relevant possibilities. Archimedes spent many hours consciously and unconsciously pondering the puzzle.
3. *Insight felt with intuitive force* is the constructive resolution, which brings the incoherent elements together into a new whole and within a new context of meaning. While stepping into a public bath Archimedes saw the water rise against the marks on the wall. He suddenly connected (bisociation) with the problem and solved it in his mind.<sup>39</sup> If the quantity of water displaced corresponded to the weight per volume unit of gold, then the crown could be "weighed" and compared with the same quantity of gold in water. If the volume of water displaced was in agreement

then all was fine; if more water was displaced then an alloy was used in the crown.

4. *Release and re-patterning* is the release of energy bound up in the conflict. Archimedes' insight, at the intellectual and emotional levels, released such energy and excitement that he jumped out of the bath naked and ran into the streets of Syracuse shouting "Eureka! Eureka!" (I've found it!).
5. *Interpretation and verification* is the spirit seeking confirmation and verification of the resolution of the conflict. It "may take various forms, from an empirical test for scientific insight, to public confirmation in the case of interpersonal insight, to sheer aesthetic or metaphysical elegance and a claim—as when persons simply know artistically or conceptually that a piece of work is finished because it is 'too beautiful' to be wrong or different."<sup>40</sup>

Archimedes put his insight to test according to the canons of coherence and correspondence. He not only solved the given problem but the discovery yielded the first principles of hydrostatics, a hidden order in the nature of things.<sup>41</sup>

Let me bring together the discussion on conscientization, logic of transformation, and the dynamics in spiritual theology. Implicit in the process of conscientization is the logic of transformation. When a conflict-in-context is indwelt in the context of the Holy there is (i) an opportunity for awakening to the higher order of reality disclosed in Jesus Christ and the deepening of one's understanding of four-dimensional reality; (ii) an opportunity for a person to go through the process of purgation, illumination or intuitive insight with imaginative force, leading to unification and empowerment in the Spirit for action in the world.

### The Direction of Transformation

Transformation is not narrowly conceived in individualistic terms but is seen as impacting all areas of human action—cultural, social and personal.

Changes in one area impact other areas, like a kaleidoscope. The direction of transformation in all the areas of human action<sup>42</sup> is summarized as follows:

1. *The Psyche Box*. The ego is transformed and so also its defenses, echoing Paul, "I, yet not I, but Christ": The ego is not annihilated in redemptive transformation, but comes under the marginal control of the Spirit. Secondary repression is transformed into patience and control, projection into empathy, denial becomes forgiveness; regression is turned into service of the

transcendent; fantasy formation becomes the vision of God; projection becomes vicarious suffering; isolation becomes concentration; and reaction formation becomes the capacity to return good for evil.<sup>43</sup>

2. *The Social Box.* The transformation of roles is brought about by the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ, resulting in *koinonia*.<sup>44</sup> Loder expresses it: “We, yet not we but Christ.”<sup>45</sup> In another place, he says, “This can be defined with the help of theologians Paul Lehmann and T.F. Torrance as the communion-creating presence of Jesus Christ. The spiritual presence of Jesus Christ becomes the relationality among persons, so that their interaction is simultaneously profoundly intimate and thoroughly functional. Such a communal relationship is like that which always accompanies the bestowal of the Spirit and creates a unique context for understanding the work-worth relationships.”<sup>46</sup> In sum, roles are now reversible. *Koinonia* and the institution understood as *ecclesia* are seen in dialectical relationality. *Ecclesia* arises out of *koinonia* and has to be seen as an instrument of service to *koinonia*.

3. *The Culture Box.* “What ego is to personality, role is to society, master image is to culture. It is necessary but it must undergo transformation so as not to subvert faith and life in the Spirit.”<sup>47</sup> The master image gets transformed in several ways: first, in encounters with countervailing circumstances; second, with maturity certain cultic images might be given up; third, most significantly, it is transformed when “something coming from within or from without touches the nucleus of the image.”<sup>48</sup> Loder says this could happen with the death of a loved one, experiences of near death, disaster, unusual intervention of God as in Peter’s encounter with Jesus Christ on the Sea of Galilee (with the great haul of fish), Paul’s encounter on the road to Damascus, and so on. The transformation of the master image results in communion with the imageless spiritual presence disclosed by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

4. *The Organism Box.* In the spirit to Spirit encounter, the human body might find healing as an eschatological event and cognition will seek for the ultimate intelligibility that holds the universe together in Jesus Christ. Thus, one seeks the study the Word of God in the context of *koinonia*.

## Discernment

The Christomorphic pattern gives us lenses to observe and study the Divine at work with, in, and through the human. Loder places his work in the category of “Christ the transformer of culture” in Niebuhr’s typology found in *Christ and Culture*.<sup>49</sup> This way of classifying his work mitigates any charge that a Christomorphic emphasis lends itself to triumphalism or exclusivism. I think a Christomorphic approach to transformation and socialization helps us to study any phenomenon in any context from God’s action in Jesus Christ. While God’s action in Jesus Christ is definitive, the neo-Parsonian model of interpretation built on the Christomorphic pattern is not disrespectful of different ways the Divine-human phenomena may appear in diverse cultures. The model brings about a corrective where needed and is

***A course of study needs to begin and end in worship. Thus, an opportunity for the human spirit’s interaction with the Divine is consciously recognized.***

mutually enriching for those engaging in cross-cultural study, without losing the integrity of the Chalcedonian formulation. One would need to exercise discernment of God’s action in and through human beings and in communities from psychological and theological perspectives. In this way, Loder seeks to maintain the integrity of the human sciences and theology.

From a theological perspective, some of the criteria for discerning God’s action are whether subjective experiences lead one to God in Jesus Christ, to desire to love, to hunger for the knowledge of God and God’s presence, to seek Christian fellowship, to deepen one’s understanding of four dimensional reality, and so on. From a psychological perspective some guidelines would be a sense of freedom as opposed to compulsion, in touch with reality; living in the present, and so forth.<sup>50</sup> To this list, one may add that Loder was conscious of discerning what God is doing in any phenomena across all fields. Though he does not explicitly state it, a Christomorphic lens is implicit for discerning God’s action in the larger world. This approach is defined in how one is to do science, i.e. how theory emerges as one indwells the object of study: “Theory must emerge from how it is, not from what we wish or require that it be. If we truly see it in its depth, or terms of its deepest contours, we

will see what God is doing in and through this remarkable phenomenon.<sup>51</sup>

The *implications* for seminary education on the basis of Freire, Gandhi, and Loder are briefly summarized as follows. These are merely guidelines which need to be appropriated critically in a context. Also, certain practices suggested are not to be taken in the spirit that one “should” or “must” follow for transformation, as mechanical implementation is counter to the dynamics of the spirit-to-Spirit relationality. These will be helpful guidelines if joyfully but critically appropriated to become a rhythm of life.

1. Freire’s approach calls for students to be as involved as teachers in the development of the curriculum and in the teaching-learning process. The students and teachers are called teacher-students and student-teachers who are constantly in dialogue about a conflict-in-context.
2. Gandhi’s approach highlights the importance of training in nonviolence in the context of change and transformation in a violent world. Freire, Gandhi, and Loder emphasize the role of conflict-in-context as a place to start the process of transformation.

The remaining points are drawn from Loder’s approach to education, where he seeks to ground conflict learning in the Spirit. These guidelines are important for teachers and students in the teaching-learning context.

3. A course of study needs to begin and end in worship. Thus, an opportunity for the human spirit’s interaction with the Divine is consciously recognized.
4. Encourage conflict-in-context and the theory-praxis relationality. In other words, empirico-theoretical approach to scientific study is to be encouraged.
5. Provide opportunities for discovery learning by giving space for the process of indwelling the conflict and scanning for resolutions.
6. Engage the imagination in creative problem solving, as imagination is an organ of truth.
7. Celebrate learning, thus making study a joyful activity.
8. Provide avenues for interpretation and verification appropriate to the field of study.
9. End a course of study with the doxology, thus grounding all learning in God, in God’s service, and to God’s glory.

Loder exemplified these principles in his teaching. The dimension of worship became important for him in 1972.<sup>52</sup> He always began a course by pointing to the Holy Spirit as the teacher. He would dramatically say something like, “I am not the teacher for this course,” and after a pause, raising his index finger upward he would say, “The Holy Spirit is the teacher.” Most likely directing his gaze into disbelieving eyes he would continue, “I am saying what the gospel declares and the theology of the church affirms.” Then he would offer a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to come and teach. He did this whether he taught Kierkegaard or Theology and Science.

In sum, there is no neutral education. One privileges either socialization or transformation. The models of education help us evaluate individually and collectively whether we are learning to minister in the Spirit as Jesus Christ showed us starting at Nazareth.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lifestyle here does not refer to the latest fad but to the energy of a lifetime one invests in ways of being in the world.

<sup>2</sup> Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator.

<sup>3</sup> M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948) is the father of the Indian nation.

<sup>4</sup> James E. Loder (1931-2001) was the Mary D. Synott Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, and remained in that position until his death in 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Several portions of this essay are taken from my doctoral dissertation, which has been submitted to Princeton Theological Seminary, to be defended on April 25, 05.

<sup>6</sup> James E. Loder, “Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit” (Lecture 1: The Crux of Christian Education: Introductory Dilemmas and a Critical Perspective. ED-105. Princeton Theological Seminary, 1993/94). Loder is drawing from Talcott Parsons.

<sup>7</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 1.

<sup>8</sup> “‘Relationality’ is similar, but not synonymous with, ‘relationship.’ A connection that is maintained by two polarities is a relationship; when that relationship takes on a life of its own, defining and sustaining the polarities—not the other way around—then we will speak of a relationality.” James E. Loder, *Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1998), 16.

<sup>9</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 1.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth A. Frykberg (Adjunct Professor, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1993/94) identified four metaphors that described curriculums and models of education. The

first three are drawn from Herbert M. Kliebard.

“Metaphorical Roots of Curriculum Design” in William Pinar, ed., *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1975), 84-85.

<sup>11</sup> The iconic or window metaphor is drawn from Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 8: Culture: Word and Cultural Transformation; and Elizabeth A. Frykberg, Lecture 11: Curriculum: Planning, Choosing, and Writing.

<sup>12</sup> The fifth and sixth are from Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974).

<sup>13</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 3: Society: Social Reality Shapes a Lifetime. Four Basic Lifestyles.

<sup>14</sup> Loder, “Educational ministry,” Lecture 3.

<sup>15</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 3.

<sup>16</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>17</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 3.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Shauall (1920-2002) was Henry Winters Luce Professor of Ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary.

<sup>19</sup> In the foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Satya*, “truth” in Sanskrit, is a derivative of *Sat*, “that which is.” Thus, *Satyagraha* might be translated as holding firmly to Truth, i.e. “that which is” as opposed to “that which appears to be,” or untruth.

<sup>21</sup> *Ahimsa* might be translated as unconditional love and one is to grow in it daily. It is the means to get at the Truth. The way to Truth is not through rationality but through love.

<sup>22</sup> The Sanskrit word *Sarvodaya* is “the welfare of all” or literally, “The Uplift of All.”

<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed discussion on Gandhi see Ajit A. Prasadam, “A Study of Gandhi’s Nonviolence: A Framework and Analysis” in Chad R. Abbott and Everett Mitchell, eds., *Breaking Silence: Pastoral Approaches For Creating An Ethos Of Peace* (Longmont, Co.: Pilgrims Process, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> He lived with the migrant worker camps in Brazil and Chile for about 6 months and discovered key generative terms like “slum” (favella). In the class sessions he broke the words into syllables and taught the workers to rearrange the syllables (favella  $\Rightarrow$  vela = candle  $\Rightarrow$  vivo = I live) to make and pronounce new words. When they discovered they could read and write, they also discovered they could name, articulate, and read about their own situation. They now had words for their situation. This is a moment of insight and release of energy.

<sup>26</sup> “I now realize I am a man; an educated man.” “We were blind, now our eyes have been opened.” “Before this, words meant nothing to me; now they speak to me and I can make them speak.” “I work, and working I transform the world.”

<sup>27</sup> Implicit in the process of conscientization is the logic of transformation, as described by James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989). The logic of transformation is based on the disclosure model of knowing. In other words, as we indwell the object to be known within its context, it discloses itself. This way of knowing was evident in Einstein’s discovery of the theory of relativity as well as in the work of other

scientists. Michael Polanyi, a scientist turned philosopher described this way of knowing. Loder refines it into five movements, using the classic story of Archimedes. The same process may also be seen in the story of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. This will be discussed later in the essay.

<sup>28</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 119-186.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel S. Schipani. *Conscientization And Creativity: Paulo Freire and Christian Education* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> Paul Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

<sup>31</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. appropriated Gandhi’s method within a Christian framework. Clayborne Carson. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 23-24, 121-134.

<sup>32</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 8.

<sup>33</sup> Loder critically draws on Soren Kierkegaard (*Sickness Unto Death*), Merleau Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception*), Martin Heidegger (*Being and Time*), and Rudolf Otto (*The Idea of the Holy*) in the development of his view of Reality as four dimensional (*Transforming Moment*, 67-91).

<sup>34</sup> Loder, *Logic of the Spirit*, xii-xiii, 34-36.

<sup>35</sup> I Cor.2:10-11; Rom. 8:16; Phil. 2:12.

<sup>36</sup> Loder, *Logic of the Spirit*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Implicit in conscientization is the logic of transformation, described by Loder (*The Transforming Moment*, 35-65). Other contexts cited by Loder where the logic of transformation might be spelled out are Carl Jung’s transformation of the ego; Anthony Wallace’s revitalization movements; social transformation as set forth in Manfred Halpern; cultural transformation as in Claude Levi-Strauss’ studies of myths, and so on.

<sup>38</sup> This way of knowing was evident in Einstein’s discovery of the theory of relativity and the work of other scientists, such as, Michael Polanyi, a scientist turned philosopher.

<sup>39</sup> Loder draws on Arthur Koestler’s term “bi-sociation” as a way to summarize “the crux of such an imaginative construct: it is two habitually incompatible frames of reference converging, usually with surprising suddenness, to compose a meaningful unity.” (*Transforming Moment*, 38)

<sup>40</sup> James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt. *The Knight’s Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 254.

<sup>41</sup> Loder and Neidhardt. *The Knight’s Move*, 266.

<sup>42</sup> The following description follows sub-headings that reflect Loder’s neo-Parsonian model, an interdisciplinary model that shows that socialization and transformation impact all areas of human action.

<sup>43</sup> Loder, *Logic of the Spirit*, 197.

<sup>44</sup> The term *koinonia* was understood as the *perichoretic* relationality in the inner life of God, by the Greek fathers, and, by the Latin fathers, as the “moving around within the Trinity, such that among the persons there is mutual interpenetration without any loss of identity. Individuality and mutuality are simultaneously affirmed, and the

members of the Trinity can exchange places or mutually indwell one another without changing their identity.”

Loder, *Logic of the Spirit*, 195.

<sup>45</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 7: Society: *Koinonia* and Societal Transformation.

<sup>46</sup> Loder, *Logic of the Spirit*, 194.

<sup>47</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 8: “Cultural: Word and Cultural Transformation.”

<sup>48</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry,” Lecture 8.

<sup>49</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951) lists five ways in which Christ has been related to culture: (1) Christ against culture, (2) Christ of culture, (3) Christ above culture, (4) Christ and culture in paradox, (5) Christ the transformer of culture.

<sup>50</sup> Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 183-210.

<sup>51</sup> Loder, “Educational Ministry”, Lectures 1, 8.

<sup>52</sup> In 1970 he had a near death experience. It took him two years to recognize that God was at work in his life in a

healing way. See *The Transforming Moment*, 9-13. In an interview with Dana Wright he said, “...before 1970 I was doing all my teaching within a basic psychoanalytic model, that conflict learning is basic to psychoanalysis. So I was upgrading psychoanalysis a little bit. But that was the basic shape of my understanding. After 1970 I realized it was the Spirit of God who creates the problem and guides us into truth. And the whole convictional picture in four dimensions began to become a way for me to talk about what I know had happened, and what could happen. And so, it was still conflictual, but now it had shifted into a much bigger perspective. And the dynamics involved were not just limited to the human spirit but also to the divine redemption in action.” Dana R. Wright and John D. Kuentzel, eds., *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 15-16.

## INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT IAIN TORRANCE

*Conducted by Susan and Neil Arner on February 16, 2005*

**PTR: At this busy time for you, The Princeton Theological Review is especially grateful for your time. We are preparing a spring issue that will assess the current state of seminary education, so we are interested in hearing your views on various matters related to the current status and future prospects of seminary education, both at Princeton and in the broader Christian world.**

Torrance: You are welcome. I am very committed to spending time with students.

**PTR: What is your evaluation of the health of the seminaries in America and Europe?**

Torrance: They are really difficult to compare, indeed almost impossible to compare. The system in Scotland does not have seminaries. People go to the secular universities and take a secular degree. The challenge always was how to translate that education into practice.

What I see at Princeton and other American seminaries that I have visited are institutions committed to the church. As a result, the behavior of faith-driven people is evident everywhere. It would be unheard of in Scotland for a person to pray before lecture. It would be extremely unusual to offer a prayer before a faculty meeting. These things here are routine. There are many times that I smile inwardly because it is a different social world.

**PTR: You have now been president of Princeton Seminary for seven months. What characteristics of this educational institution are most vivid to you now?**

Torrance: I think of a variety of things, two of which are the Speer and Luce Libraries that provide absolutely wonderful library faculties. What is unique about the seminary libraries is the accessibility and the sheer friendliness of the staff. That means that the special collections are accessible in a way that they just are not in other libraries where I have been. In the Bodleian Library at Oxford, you request up to six books and they are brought to you—you have no access to them.

Next, I am very impressed by the commitment to worship and the vitality of the worship in Miller Chapel. Chapel-related matters are excellently led by Kristin Saldine. I think she is a wonderful minister of chapel. I view her as my minister, and this is a good thing. I appreciate the singing, the enthusiasm and quality of the music, and everything that Martin Tel brings to the chapel with the assistance of Chi Yi Chen

and the various choirs. That strikes me as being extremely impressive. When our children came at Christmas and they came to worship, they remarked, "People here really mean it." Coming out of the very much more critical—and at times cynical—European culture, they were genuinely impressed by the committed nature of worship at the chapel.

Furthermore, the students here are very friendly. They have made me very welcome. For a long time I have been living here on my own, so I have been eating at the Mackay Center. It has been good to go to the cafeteria and meet students.

**PTR: At which aspects of seminary education do you think Princeton excels?**

Torrance: It would be very difficult—I think it could be invidious—to pick out every particular strength because there are so many. I think that it would be a misjudgment if I tried to go through and list every strength of the seminary because then I would miss particular individuals.

Princeton puts a great deal into preaching and voice. I think that is something that it does more than many other institutions. Princeton takes homiletics seriously, and that has been a traditional strength of Princeton. I am told there are only about four schools in America that emphasize preaching, so it is a very distinctive strength here.

I think it is undeniable that Princeton is seen internationally as a place where there are several very good scholars of the work of Karl Barth. The seminary not only has scholars who work in that area, but it also has very significant holdings in the work of Karl Barth in the Special Collections of the library. Coming out of the Reformed world in Europe, Princeton is known for the strength it has in Karl Barth scholarship.

**PTR: Are there other ways Princeton is distinguished in the eyes of European educators?**

Torrance: Mainly through the library, the seminary has a facility for visiting scholars. People come from all over the world, stay in Payne Hall, and use the library facilities. It is a great benefit for scholars to be able to go somewhere that they are not interrupted so that they can concentrate on a piece of research. We offer that facility here. Two of the questions I ask myself are: "Who are the people that will most benefit academically from this facility?" and "Who are the people who do not in any sense have access to these

kinds of resources?" By enabling such people to come here, we can benefit them.

Princeton is known both for its sheer academic excellence and for providing what may be life-changing experiences to people who come to research here. We must balance our own quest for excellence with the quest for moral beauty—that is, sharing our resources in a sensible way.

**PTR: In your opinion, which aspects of the Princeton seminary education need to be altered?**

Torrance: My understanding is that the seminary has not had a full-scale and critical look at its curriculum for maybe two decades. Over the last two decades the world has changed. Most obviously, 9/11 has changed the world, but there have been other major events. For example, we have seen that Christianity is now an enormous part of the life and vitality of the developing world. This burgeoning Christianity is in many ways overshadowing the nature of Christianity in the developed world of the North and West.

Furthermore, I think that the nature of ministry has changed considerably over the past 20 years. Ministry is now more collaborative and enabling; it is team related. There is greater involvement of lay people in ministry. In certain senses, the distinction between the ordained person and persons who are not ordained is becoming tenuous. The older model of the minister as being a male who works on his own is a caricature that has now shifted.

I think there are other changes to be made to the curriculum. Older styles of curricula heavily emphasize book knowledge and are characterized by massively heavy reading lists. I think such a curriculum style is characteristic of at least a decade ago. More modern curricula pay far more attention to skills and outcomes. New curricula address the question, "What are the skill sets that students require to be ministers in today's church?"

An additional concern is how to shift emphasis from the older model of faculty teaching to the newer model of student learning. We must treat students as learners rather than sponges or absorbers. We should take seriously the fact that students continue to be learners throughout their lives. Shifting to this new model will require that we listen to what the church and alumni are saying—particularly alumni who have reached maybe 10 years' distance from the seminary. Such people have become experienced and mature practitioners who are ready to serve as effective consultants. They can say, "These are the ways in which the church is changing, and I have learned to do this on its behalf."

I worry that we have a defensive mentality in the seminary. We feel that we have to cram everything in or the curriculum will be somehow deficient. The consequence of this attitude is overload and anxiety. I believe that what we should try to do in theological education is give people not only knowledge but also skills. Skills are living things, and skills have to do with relating to people and practicing. I hope that we can shift our curriculum more in that direction. This approach would not dilute scholarship but would look at scholarship differently.

**PTR: In what ways did your parish experience in Northmavine help you realize which aspects of parish ministry can and cannot be taught in a classroom?**

Torrance: I think a great deal can be taught in the classroom. Absolutely essential pastoral skills have to do with listening and paying attention. To really listen to someone, you must try to understand what they are saying and where they are coming from. This skill contributes to being an effective pastoral minister, and at least elements of it can be taught.

Acute pastoral matters like ministering to people who are dying and to people who are bereaved comprise an important part of being able to pastor effectively. I am not trying to give the impression that I think that being a minister is purely a functional thing, as if the only thing that matters is being efficient. The person who is a Christian minister is there to preach in word and action the gospel of Jesus Christ, and sometimes that can be very difficult.

The main function of the parish minister is to bless the people in the name of God. That very simple instruction has never left me. I was also taught very much that when you go into parish ministry it is not you who are the pastor because ultimately the pastor is Jesus Christ. All we do is share in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and that is the highest privilege. Those are in a sense very simple guiding principles, the structures by which I try to live.

**PTR: In a thumbnail sketch, what do you hope Princeton Seminary will look like in 15 years?**

Torrance: Less anxious, less driven, less compulsive. More skills-related, and thereby less rigid. Fewer boundaries between disciplines and departments. Aware that systematic theology always involves Bible, and aware that the expression of systematic theology will always come out in some form of preaching or proclaiming. Conscious of the intrinsic links between Bible and Bible history.

I would like to see a more focused and deliberate international outreach in the form of collaborations with

institutions where we can help make a difference. I want to see far more use of digitized resources. I would like to see different forms of access. Fifteen years from now, we will undoubtedly be questioning whether the seminary is as residential as it is.

Another thing I would sincerely like to see is better links between the university and the seminary. It seems to be complete madness that we are co-located with one of five best universities in the world and not doing

everything in our power to enable students to benefit from Firestone Library and the University classes. I would very much like to see an open and friendly shared sense of vision and commitment to learning with mutual respect between us and Princeton University.

**PTR: On behalf of the PTR, we thank you for sharing your time and candid responses with us.**



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Holiness**

by John Webster, William B. Eerdmans, 2003. 116 pages.

*Reviewed by Jeremy J. Wynne*

By bringing together the content of dogmatics and the character of the dogmatician—two typically isolated realities—John Webster offers us a book that is both distinctive and important. As its title indicates, this slim volume is primarily a detailed exposition of the concept of holiness. Webster traces the concept from its source in the character (and therefore the actions) of God to the character of the church which God calls into existence, and thus describes holiness to be a necessary characteristic of every Christian individual. This central idea—that the community of the church must be made holy as it reflects on the Holy One himself—has quite a pedigree in the history of Christian doctrine and spirituality (as even a cursory study of the writings of figures like Augustine and Anselm would reveal). In stark contrast to this lies our contemporary theological climate, in which questions regarding the character of the theologian seem too often to unnerve us; perhaps they create the feeling that one's privacy has been invaded. At the very least, this results in a certain degree of inhospitality. This book offers us a welcome occasion, then, not only to lament that which has been lost, but also to consider how a sanctified trinitarian dogmatics might be reclaimed.

The idea with which Webster leads is a methodological one; he proposes a formal principle to replace the modern process of transcendent critical inquiry. Christian dogmatics, it is argued, is one of the products of the saving activity and presence of God. As such, it receives its life through a kind of epistemological reversal. “It is no longer we who summon God before our minds to make him a matter for clever discourse,” Webster writes, “but the opposite: the holy God shows himself and summons us before him to give account of our thinking” (15). Most of modern scholarship, however, is preoccupied with making God the object of its study, a task that is bound to fail. In any encounter with the Holy God, insists Webster, we are the ones who ineluctably occupy the place of object.

What then is left for each of us as human beings? Only to be covenant partner: to come before God as “suppliant, penitent and disciple” so that you or I might be made holy (16). While this formal principle applies to dogmatics in general, its importance for the

present volume is clearly articulated: a dogmatics of holiness must itself be an exercise in holiness (99). Theologians do not primarily invest in the powers of unaided reason; rather theologians turn to prayer, fellowship, and the continual surrendering of their reason to the mortifying and vivifying powers of God’s Spirit.

Only when this crucial concept of holy reason has been sufficiently addressed does the author turn to a clear elucidation of the material with which a dogmatics of holiness is properly occupied. This material is unfolded in the three remaining chapters of the book treating, respectively, the three inseparable realities of the Holy Triune God, the church community and the Christian individual (note the priority with which these three are addressed!). His detailed exposition in these chapters makes for a lot of material. At times, the material is so dense that the argument is difficult to follow. The succinct propositional statements which head each chapter, however, make clear the structure of his reflections and help give the reader a handle on the flow of his exposition. He introduces his final chapter on “The Holiness of the Christian,” for example, with the following proposition:

The sanctification of the Christian is the work of the Holy Trinity in which the reconciled sinner is renewed for the active life of holy fellowship with God. Grounded in the electing, reconciling and perfecting work of Father, Son and Spirit, the active life of holy fellowship is the work of faith, which is at every moment characterized by mortification and vivification, and which is actual as freedom, obedience and love (78f).

Step by step—and reminiscent of Barth’s boldface introductory paragraphs—Webster unpacks each phrase of his propositions.

Let me offer from his own conclusion one instance of the nuance and concreteness of Webster’s work. One of the questions Webster analyzes is the question raised above, regarding the dismal support a dogmatics of holiness enjoys in our contemporary milieu. What answer does he provide? Among other things he notes that, while certain qualities (such as tolerance) have attained to the status of civic virtue, holiness simply does not comport with our existing understandings of human selfhood. Citing thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens, he makes the point that most individuals today seek primarily to “construct” themselves. We labor, in other words, under the conviction that the meaning of our lives is

not something we receive but rather that it is the product of self-stylization; how far this is for him from the Christian understanding of a life lived before the Holy God! In an encounter with God, Christians learn that life has a distinct goal—a telos: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:14). And this is not something we can produce for ourselves; rather, if our lives are to resemble holiness at all, they must be given over to us. Webster summarizes this point nicely: one’s becoming is primarily “discovery not invention” (104).

Holiness is a volume I wholeheartedly recommend. The author is an astute observer of our current context, and he carefully documents his argument in the volume’s endnotes. It is not surprising that, as a Reformed theologian, he draws heavily from the writings of Calvin and Barth. What is unexpected, however, is his versatility in likewise engaging thinkers such as Augustine, Tillich and Luther. We might ask in conclusion whether

Webster’s own work demonstrates the qualities of receptivity and humility—those very qualities he commands to us. Without being either God or Webster, even a well-intentioned answer seems foolish. I do know that this book both convicts and excites me. Every page testifies to a vision that Webster has seen for how theology should be approached, and the vividness of his descriptions certainly suggests that he himself has been there. His last paragraph is a prayer taken from Calvin’s writings. It includes the petition, “each day appear to us in your gospel.” In a new way, this has become a prayer of mine as well, that I might know more fully what it is to study before the Holy God.

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## REFLECTIONS

*The following reflections are written by students of Princeton Theological Seminary. The editors of the PTR invited each of them to “Identify a problem within the seminary that you feel in some way obstructs the training for ministry, and then propose a resolution for how that problem could be addressed.” Their responses, though not necessarily representing opinions of this staff, reflect the diverse personal concerns of this student body, and they provide a stimulating base for conversation regarding seminary education on this particular campus.*

### Spending Our Time: An Examination of Our Academic Calendar

by Amy Julia Becker

“I spend my time studying God.” This statement may seem normal to everyone reading this journal, but many of us in seminary forget how strange our lives appear to the outside world. We share a common vocabulary that includes words like “ords,” “Barth,” and “exegesis.” For that matter, we share words that hold little currency beyond our campuses—words like “faith,” “Jesus,” and “resurrection.” For those not preparing for a career in professional ministry (that is, for the majority of the world), the fact that seminary students become so familiar with the history of the Church, the text of the Bible, and the theological underpinnings of Christian faith seems odd, if not outright bizarre.

The strange nature of what we seminarians do has been literally “brought home” to me. I do not live with fellow students of theology. I live in a dormitory on a boarding school campus. My husband is in charge of thirty boys aged fifteen to seventeen. Sometimes these students, their parents, or my husband’s colleagues ask me outright. Other times I can imagine the question hiding behind their wrinkled brow: “You spend your time studying God?”

“Yes,” I reply with a smile. Their bemused or puzzled reactions often betray further questions that they dare not speak aloud: “Couldn’t you be doing something else? Isn’t that a waste of time?” But I have chosen, gladly, to invest the limited number of minutes, hours, months, and years allotted to me in learning about God in preparation for ministry. As with my credit card statement, the way I spend my time reflects the things I value most. I value learning, so I go to school and read lots of books. I value people, so I live with high school students and take walks with friends and have a date night with my husband. I don’t particularly value entertainment, so our television only flickers to life for an hour a week. Time, much like money, is a reflection of who I am.

Similarly, institutional time reflects, or ought to reflect, who we are as a community. We students at Princeton Theological Seminary are not merely students in a school. Rather, we are students receiving a theological education from an institution with an explicit Christian mission. Our school’s mission statement begins, “Princeton Theological Seminary prepares men and women to serve Jesus Christ.” The statement concludes,

To these ends, the Seminary provides a residential community of worship and learning where a sense of calling is tested and defined, where Scripture and the Christian tradition are appropriated critically, where faith and intellect mature and life-long friendships begin, and where habits of discipleship are so nourished that members of the community may learn to proclaim with conviction, courage, wisdom, and love the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

From this statement it is clear that our seminary values service, worship, Scripture, tradition, friendship, discipleship, and leadership. The way we spend our time as members of an academic community ought to reflect those values.

All Christians are called to live with God in time. This life with God in time begins with the crucial recognition that we are not God. Therefore, we are not eternal. We did not create time. Therefore, we cannot control time. In fact, we are mortals with grave limitations on our time. Jesus underscores the human inability to control time when he asks, “And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?” (Luke 12:25-26). Once we recognize the truth that we are limited creatures living within the bounds of time, life with God in time involves allowing that time to come under God’s rule. We conform our lives in time to God’s values and priorities rather than to our own desires for instant gratification and easy schedules. This broad idea—that we are called to live with God in time—applies to every level of our lives, both as individuals and as a community. It affects our minutes, hours, days, weeks, and years.

At Princeton Seminary, we “spend” time worshiping God every day. Our daily chapel service is

a twenty-five minute insertion (and it was an insertion, beginning in 1930<sup>1</sup>) into the academic day that affects the timing of all our classes. In contrast to secular academic communities, the Princeton Seminary student body is offered a slice of time each day to stop taking notes and to offer praise. This practice accords well with the stated values and purposes of our mission. Though our seminary is willing to interrupt the daily class schedule with a worship service, our annual calendar does not reflect our status as a Christian institution with an explicitly Christian mission. Rather, our yearly calendar asks us to conform to the pattern of a secular academic community.

Our community at Princeton Seminary is bound to the life of the Church, and the Church has long diverged from the rest of society in its understanding of time. In the increasingly secular Western world, the new year begins on January 1<sup>st</sup> with parties and kisses and champagne. Yet for the Christian Church, the new year begins with Advent four weeks before Christmas. Advent has marked the beginning of the Church year since the 8<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>2</sup> and it is a time of mourning and hope. Advent is a season for looking back with joy to the coming of Christ 2,000 years ago and for looking ahead with hope that Jesus will come again to right that which is wrong with the world.

Outside the Church, the Advent season is not acknowledged. Instead, early December marks the beginning of winter sports, the ideal time to make charitable contributions, the time to start shopping. Edward Horn writes, “God chose the time for time and eternity to meet, and time can never be the same again. The liturgy of the Christian church recognizes this fact and seeks to relate all time to the redemptive purposes of God.”<sup>3</sup> While the Gregorian calendar begins with January 1<sup>st</sup> and moves forward in twelve roughly equal parts, the Church year narrates the Christian story beginning with Advent. Our celebration of Christmas proclaims that Christ has come into the world; at Easter, we announce Christ’s death and resurrection; on Pentecost, we celebrate God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Princeton Seminary calendar reflects our commitment to academic norms, graduation dates, and American traditions. Our calendar looks remarkably similar to that of the secular boarding school where I live. In both places, the first semester follows an impractical schedule. It stretches out, halting and skidding through the late fall and early winter like a car stuck in rush-hour traffic. Both the boarding school and the seminary celebrate Thanksgiving with a very long weekend, and we scatter from both campuses for the weeks preceding and following Christmas. It is tempting to think that at seminary we take so much

time “off” at Christmas because we truly are committed to celebrating the incarnation of Christ. Yet the conformity of our calendar to those other academic institutions (not to mention the culture at large), suggests that the primary motivation for “Christmas vacation” arises as much from the way American culture treats the end of December as from any ecclesial concerns. We do not, of course, resume classes as soon as we have celebrated Christmas. Along with the rest of the country, we do not begin studying again until we have inaugurated the New Year.

The second semester at secular institutions and at Princeton Seminary also looks largely the same. Winter is interrupted prematurely by the suspension of classes in March. At both Princeton and the boarding school where I live, the second major feast of the Church year gains recognition on the calendar. Both schools nod their proverbial heads in the direction of the Christian heritage common to old East-Coast schools. Each school suspends one day of classes on Good Friday. (This suspension at Princeton, however, should not be taken as a given. For many of the past thirty years, Princeton has not officially recognized Good Friday.) In both cases, the rhythm of the semester hardly skips a beat when Easter arrives. Yet theologians and pastors agree that Easter is at the heart of the Christian faith. The Anglican *The Book of Common Prayer* states, “The sequence of all the Sundays of the Church Year depends upon the date of Easter Day.”<sup>4</sup> It is not only in a literal sense that all the other Sundays depend upon the date of Easter Day. Without Easter, Sunday worship would never have come into being. The Apostle Paul writes, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Easter was the earliest Christian celebration, and on Easter Day we rejoice in the good news of the Gospel—that Jesus Christ is risen again. We celebrate Christ’s defeat of sin, God’s power over death, and the Spirit’s gift of new life. Of all the seasons in the Christian year, Easter is most worthy of our time, our attention, and our worship.

The Church anticipates Easter throughout Lent, the forty days of penitential anticipation beginning with Ash Wednesday. Lent crescendos into Holy Week when the Church remembers the events recorded in the Gospels about Jesus’ last week on earth. Holy Week includes Maundy Thursday, a day which may be observed with a celebration of the Lord’s Supper and a service of foot washing. Maundy Thursday received its name from the Latin word *mandatum*, meaning “commandment.” John 13:34-35 records Jesus’ words, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love

one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The wider academic community has no reason to ponder the significance of this commandment. Yet we at seminary who are preparing to serve Jesus Christ certainly should pause annually to consider the command to love through service.

Princeton Seminary has long struggled to allow Easter a place of prominence within its calendar, but Easter is hard to pin down. Easter is calculated in correspondence to the Jewish Feast of Passover because the Gospels report that Jesus suffered crucifixion and death during this feast. Therefore, the date of Easter comes from the Jewish calendar which follows the lunar cycle. Easter Sunday is thus assigned the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. This date may occur any time between March 22 and April 25. For good reason, then, a seminary may have trouble maintaining consistency in scheduling while observing this fluctuating Holy Week.

It was not until 1939 that Princeton Seminary recognized Easter on its yearly academic calendar. In that year, both Thanksgiving and Easter appeared on the annual schedule for the first time. Each holiday granted students three days away from classes. Easter Recess remained on the calendar until the early 1970s. The Princeton Seminary Catalogue records thirty years of tension. Sometimes Good Friday shows up as a statement of fact; sometimes it appears as Good Friday Recess. In a rare reversion to old times, the 1995 calendar includes an Easter Recess. For the past three decades, however, Holy Week has rarely affected the way we spend our time as a community. This is not to say that chapel services ignore Holy Week. Some professors cancel class for part of the week. However, on an institutional level, we do not spend our time in conformity to the Church calendar.

Dean Armstrong offers two reasons why we do not pause for Holy Week. First, we need a fifteen-week semester in order to qualify for federal loans. Our fifteen weeks include two reading weeks and an exam week but not vacation days. Second, we need to finish our semester early enough for Princeton Seminary graduation to be held in the Princeton University chapel without interfering with the University's own graduation. As significant as these concerns may be, it seems that we at Princeton Seminary have reversed our priorities. We acknowledge our Lord's incarnation at

Christmas and his death and resurrection at Easter in a manner identical to secular academic institutions. Our schedule is not dictated by the rhythms of faith and worship in the Church. The celebration of Christ's resurrection should trump the logistical concerns of graduation.

To spend our time with a greater emphasis on worship, preparation, and celebration during Holy Week would require a change in our second semester schedule. We could modify our schedule in any number of ways: by simply extending the semester by one week (and having either a late graduation or graduation on our own campus); we could take Wednesday through Friday off and make up those days at the end of the term; we could revise the schedule for the school year, starting the first semester in August and the second semester in mid-January. My purpose here is not to advocate one of these options over another, but merely to suggest that our academic calendar should reflect the significance of Holy Week for our individual and communal lives.

Holy Week is inconvenient. It floats from the end of March to the end of April. It reminds us that we are mortals. It allows grace to disrupt our orderly lives, and this disruption invites us to stop and worship God. At Eastertide, the secular world moves forward without pausing to acknowledge that Christ has risen from the grave. Pastel rabbits and candy-shaped eggs may abound, but the holiday industry has not succeeded in wresting this day from the Church. To pause our theological studies in order to celebrate the Lord of all time would set us apart from the secular academic world, and remind us to spend our time on that which we value most—however inconvenient it might be.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Catalogues of the Officers and Students of the Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, 1930-1931.

<sup>2</sup> Edward T. Horn III, *The Christian Year* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 54.

<sup>3</sup> Horn, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1977), 13.

## Toward Producing a Cadre of Ministerial Leaders with a Prophetic-Pastoral-Political Orientation

by Christopher O'Neal Jones

We live a world filled with evil and sin, resulting in brokenness, subjugation, and oppression. Many of us began our theological education as a response to a call. This call is in service to God and the world, and includes the imperative to address and redress the systemic, systematic, cultural, and psychological ills that plague our world, robbing it of the wholeness (*shalom*) and vitality that God intends for it. Identifying with womanist and black theologies as well as other prophetic Christian perspectives, I assert the interrelatedness of life and the kinship of humanity. There is a need for persons to unite their efforts to address and redress evil. Hence my perspective aims to be broad, including the sociopolitical aspects of evil (e.g., political marginalization) as well as the psychosocial aspects (e.g., the internalized oppression felt by many women who are victims of physical assault). Given the fact that evil and its effects continue beyond the cessation of a particular action (e.g., certain psychological issues of blacks and non-blacks that are a consequence of slavery), it is necessary to focus on redress/repair and prevention. Consequently, there is a need to have one's ministry include prophetic, pastoral, and political concerns. This approach to ministry means clinging to the prophetic and its cry for justice and truth (particularly since humanity demonstrates strong tendencies toward apostasy and inhumanity); the pastoral and its proclivity toward nurturing wholeness; and the political and its ideal of freedom, justice, equality, and security for all.<sup>1</sup> This view of ministry suggests that, although persons are unique and their vocations vary, they are united by a common call to love God and their neighbors as themselves. This call is inclusive of promoting and pursuing truth, justice, wholeness, and liberation for all life.<sup>2</sup>

In essence a prophetic-pastoral-political orientation would mean that Christians must scrutinize their own lives and the lives of others, searching for those things that promote justice and wholeness and exposing and overcoming those things that thwart and impede justice and wholeness. Successful ministerial practice from this orientation requires a significant amount of knowledge as well as a nuanced understanding of complex social, political, and psychological problems. This implies that theological institutions, given their

central role in educating and preparing ministers, should proactively seek to give students the knowledge and skills that will help them to be effective in the prophetic, pastoral, and political aspects of their ministries. Princeton Seminary and other institutions, however, are ineffective at providing this preparation. Curricular changes are needed if the seminary is going to promote the church's mission effectively and thus remain faithful to its call.

Princeton Seminary's ineffectiveness stems from the marginalization in the curriculum of many issues that pertain to women, racial and ethnic minorities, non-heterosexuals, non-Westerners, non-Northerners, and persons from lower socioeconomic background. Although courses exist that explore some of the issues and perspectives of these communities, my experience at Princeton Seminary suggests that students will not sufficiently encounter these issues in their required courses. Moreover, the discussion which does happen is cursory, demonstrating a major disparity between certain persons and the "majority" group. Not only does the curriculum imply a lesser significance of these persons' interests and perspectives within the life of the church, but it also mitigates strides made in other areas that seek to emphasize equally the theological perspectives of different traditions. This deficiency in the curriculum could also impede or even distort a person's developing clarity regarding her or his calling, since this information could plausibly help someone to see new possibilities about what God may be calling her or him to do. Furthermore, if persons are unaware of the myriad issues facing the church and society at large, persons could inadvertently engage in ministry (whether in the academy, local church, mission field or other locales) in such a way that works against the ministries of other Christians. For example, the community organizer's ministry in urban America could be undermined by the suburban pastor who never addresses business ethics, leaving the executive in a corporation without the potentially effective critique of certain business practices that are instrumental in creating the urban problems that the community organizer is seeking to overcome.

All of this means that while we profess that ours is a faith that advances an idea of the kinship and equality of humanity, our current curriculum suggests an existence that is antithetical to the kinship and equality of humanity. We are well aware that what hurts one, hurts all! The concerns and perspectives of the majority culture, however, do not encompass the concerns of all! It is undesirable and objectionable to think that a person's faithful response to God's call could be met by a theological institution's curriculum that ineffectively

prepares the person for ministry in our ever-changing and diverse world. This is, however, the experience that not a few seminarians encounter. We must consider something: *If there is a disconnect between a person's faithful response to God's calling on his or her life that causes one to pursue theological education and the composition of the theological education, then our theological institutions could be impeding the person's development for ministry.*<sup>3</sup> This hindering would not only be a disservice to the person and the institution's mission, but the entire body of Christ and the world. Let us now consider an additional possibility to our already established attempts to resist and overcome sin and evil through striving to be faithful to our call to pursue truth, justice, and wholeness and demonstrate love above all else.

Princeton Seminary must be more intentional about seriously engaging a broad diversity of perspectives if it is to serve its students, the church, the world, and God faithfully. Addressing the inadequacies of the current curriculum will require that students, as well as faculty and staff, be further exposed to the most important issues that exist in today's global and diverse society. Sociologists have demonstrated that exposure to different peoples can be effective in reducing certain insensitivities and prejudices. Such exposure might also contribute toward ameliorating some of the shortcomings of theological education. Currently, it seems undeniable that concerns for certain minorities and women are of secondary importance at best. *My proposal is to bring the concerns that are specifically central to minorities and women to the entire student body.*<sup>4</sup> This proposal aims to satisfy a need that is already acknowledged in the wider community of theological institutions. For example, the Association of Theological Schools demonstrates its awareness of the need for education in cultural sensitivity when it states regarding the M.Div. program, "The program shall provide opportunity to develop an understanding of the cultural realities and structures within which the church lives and carries out its mission."<sup>5</sup> The church and its ministry are global, and the seminary is in a unique position to expose students to a wide variety of issues and to allow students to respond to these issues from their own theological traditions (e.g., womanist or Reformed).<sup>6</sup>

Current year-long courses (like Princeton Seminary's speech education and homiletics classes as well as the introductory Old and New Testament courses) could serve as a model for the kinds of curricular changes that I envision. Imagine a course in which professors lecture weekly over the course of an academic year on, for example, "The Church, Sin, and

Moral Evil." Scholars discuss different views on particular types of moral evil. Among these issues are matters relating to sex, gender, race, culture, poverty, crime, sexual abuse, inequality, sexuality, environmental destruction, violence, Christian complicity and duplicity with regard to evil, and human trafficking. Also, the course explores issues such as xenophobia, empire versus democracy, and the difference between peace as we ordinarily understand it (as ignoring, glossing over, or being indifferent to problems) and true peace as conveyed by the Hebrew term *shalom*, or "wholeness." Personal stories are told and read, painful movies are watched (e.g., *Mississippi Burning* and *Bastard Out of Carolina*), and ignored history is discussed. Students and professors discuss these issues, paying attention to the prophetic, the political, and the pastoral. Varying perspectives are brought to bear on these issues, conveying the many nuances and difficulties involved (how corporate greed influences sex trafficking, for instance, and the psycho-social legacy of such trafficking). Students participate in small groups to discuss these movies, stories, books, or histories. The students are held responsible for their work, and they are expected to demonstrate virtues like love, truth, and justice as they participate. Given that this course would occur at a theological institution, an institution that should not take a neutral stance toward evil, students are challenged to engage the truth actively and not ignore it. Moreover, students and professors engage each other, challenging each others' views, developing the maturity needed to discuss "difficult" topics, and inspiring persons not to abdicate their call to be the church of Jesus Christ. A course like this could also stimulate richer discussions in other courses that cover different subject matter.

Before addressing the practicalities of this proposal, let us consider potential outcomes. The proposed format could genuinely address ecclesial concerns, resulting in the following: 1) demonstrating that the church and academy are serious about justice and wholeness; 2) giving students an opportunity to scrutinize their background, thereby mitigating the prejudices and wrong-headed "-isms" that students bring to their theological education; 3) making more perspicuous the need for minorities and women in the academy as students realize just how difficult it is to speak outside of one's "dominant" voice; 4) increasing the number of voices within the church; 5) heightening the awareness of the diversity of the church and our global society, thereby enabling a more effective witness and praxis; and 6) simply being the church of Jesus Christ by loving and pursuing truth and justice.

even if it means that we, like Christ, are persecuted for this pursuit.

Not being overtaken by nihilism or apathy, I assert that a required curricular addition (that is not at the exclusion of other needed structural changes) would be indispensable in this theological institution's service to God, the church, and the world. Such an addition would help move the seminary forward on a path toward educating a cadre of ministers who understand their vocation's relationship to the Christian witness of love, truth, justice, liberation, and wholeness, and who are also more knowledgeable about the many issues that must be addressed as the Church seeks to improve its *praxis*.

There are certain challenges that work against the adoption of my proposal. Laying aside for the moment questions of public approval, effects on the overall curriculum, and the question of whether the student body shares my concerns, I limit my focus to the question of human and financial resources. Since few theological institutions have faculty and staff with sufficient knowledge and expertise to implement the lectures and discussion groups I have proposed, it may seem that my ambitious proposal is wishful thinking. This conclusion could be persuasive if it were not for our technological resources, particularly the web and satellite technology, as well as other resources, like visiting scholars and/or workshops. These resources would allow full-time faculty to share responsibility with outside experts who can contribute to the subject matter. If faculty are not present at a particular theological institution, they could use a visiting scholar for a day, a week, or longer or use a prepared lecture from the web. This temporary answer, however, should not imply that scholars with this knowledge are unneeded at each institution. But exposing students to those few scholars who do possess the adequate expertise may motivate these students to acquire the expertise that will enable them to contribute to contextually relevant theological education in the future, thereby reducing the penury of human resources.

By helping Princeton Seminary and other theological institutions to pursue love, justice, unity, and the kinship of all humanity unashamedly, the course I propose would serve as a proactive and significant strategy to combat much social, political,

cultural, religious, emotional, and psychological evils that plague both the church and our world. Moreover, given the gravity and number of these topics, this course, which ideally would be taught at a reasonable pace to promote internalization and substantive engagement, would occupy the minds of many persons and help them come to terms with some serious issues. It would also help us to scrutinize the curriculum at large, maybe even inspiring an examination of the nature and aim of other curricular requirements, as well as electives. Jesus assumed that his disciples would make disciples throughout the world by teaching and embodying certain principles. I see this course as an effort to apply Christian notions of love, justice, liberation and wholeness to public and social problems that plague our world, thus aiding in our understanding of what discipleship and Christian witness mean in today's context.

I pray that ours is the generation that refuses to fail the Great Commission. To these ends we strive: to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves! Theological institutions play a critical role in educating those that God calls to ministry. May they be faithful in their calling! May we all be faithful to our calling!

*Christopher O'Neal Jones is an M.Div. middler at Princeton Theological Seminary.*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These crude distinctions between the prophetic, pastoral, and political are made for sake of space. I believe that each of these dimensions of ministry share characteristics and ideas, and should be interrelated.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, to be prophetic, pastoral, or political does not mean that one's vocation or career is the pastorate, the political official etc. With every vocation, there is the need to demonstrate these values and orientations.

<sup>3</sup> By voice I mean one's identity and contribution to Christian ministry.

<sup>4</sup> I do not limit this concern to the student body but mean to include the institution's faculty, staff, and administration.

<sup>5</sup> See A.3.1.2. <http://www.ats.edu/accredit/aca.htm>. March 10, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> I do not mean to suggest that some traditions (e.g., oppressive ones) should not be challenged or even abandoned.

## Crisis In Theological Education: A Latina/o Perspective

by Robert D. La Bril

I never thought of institutions, such as PTS, as being White institutions, but I have begun to understand how systematic racism is. I wonder how I would feel if, instead of PTS seeming like a homecoming, a blend of the Whitworth College community where I grew up and my undergraduate experience at Dartmouth College, PTS was, in its very being, alien to me, my culture, my people and my experience? —Renn J. Turner

Our seminaries...are not simply in intellectual disarray and existential disorientation; our very conceptions of what they should be doing are in shambles. —Cornel West<sup>1</sup>

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Latinas/os represent 12.5 percent of the U.S. population, about 35.3 million individuals.<sup>2</sup> A survey performed in 2002 reports that about eight million U.S. Latinas/os characterize themselves as Protestants or other Christians.<sup>3</sup> To put these figures into national perspective, Gaston Espinosa, assistant professor of Religious Studies at Claremont McKenna College and Past Project Manager of the Hispanic Churches in American Public Life project, says that there are more Latina/o Protestants residing in the U.S. than American Jews, Muslims, Episcopalians or Presbyterians.<sup>4</sup> Seventy percent (about 25 million) of U.S. Latinas/os identify themselves as Catholic, making the Catholic Church and the icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe the most salient symbols of Latina/o religion.<sup>5</sup> All of these figures converge on one undeniable fact: Latinas/os comprise a significant slice of the U.S. population for whom Christianity matters. From this fact we can infer that seminarians coming out of Princeton Theological Seminary will inevitably work with, and/or on behalf of, Latinas/os throughout their ministerial journeys.<sup>6</sup> In light of these trends, it is my claim that Princeton Theological Seminary makes oversights and missteps concerning the needs of Latinas/os in seminary, such that they do not have a prescriptive edge concerning what a great many Latinas/os are actually experiencing outside of seminary life. Because Latina/o students often do not feel at home with the theological education being offered at Princeton and therefore do not feel at home when they return to their communities, *alienation* has become the central indicator of the crisis in education at this institution.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the issues, I cannot possibly do justice in this reflection to all the

dynamics contributing to the alienation of Latina/o seminarians at PTS. Therefore, I will make no attempt to include every possible trend, historical influence, statistic, or figure in this discussion. Instead, I will first discuss how *marginalization* and *assimilation* taking place within theological education are underlying causes for the alienation experienced by Latina/o seminarians at this institution. Second, I shall discuss some claims made in the seminary's mission statement and the demands it places on how Princeton Theological Seminary does theological education. Third, I shall show how these demands have been met with sluggish and clumsy commitment on behalf of Princeton's four academic departments (*i.e.* practical theology, systematic theology, biblical studies, and church history). Fourth, I shall briefly suggest a few things that can be done to avoid the longstanding alienation experienced by Latina/o seminarians at Princeton.

The interconnected dynamics of marginalization and assimilation are harpooning matters pertaining to Latina/o cultural identity, self-respect, and spiritual outlook. One way theological education at Princeton continues to marginalize such matters is by confining them to the outer limit of elective courses or by superficially mentioning them in class. As a result, Latinas/os are made to study theology through the gaze of the predominately male, white, middle or upper class canonized scholars. Assimilation unfairly presses Latina/o seminarians into a "one size fits all" approach to theological education.<sup>7</sup> This "one size fits all" approach to education indoctrinates all students with a limited set of concepts, ideals, and skills regardless of individual or communal particularities. To make this idea clear, picture trying to fit feet that are size eleven into stilettos or wingtips that are size eight. Metaphorically speaking and with regard to education, there are several Latina/o seminarians at Princeton who are walking around with blisters, barely fitting in their shoes, knowing that what they have been forced to wear belongs to another. By virtually establishing one way of knowing as the criterion of all educational value, whether intentional or not, Princeton Seminary distorts and perverts other meaningful processes by and through which Latinas/os (and other ethnic/racial communities) image their culture and construct knowledge.<sup>8</sup> With marginalization and assimilation hard at work within the theological education program at Princeton, who can blame Latinos/as and other people of color for experiencing a profound sense of alienation?

To engage in a serious discussion of the *crisis* of theological education at Princeton, we must analyze the structural components that inform its curriculum. For

this task we must turn to the seminary's mission statement. Let us briefly examine one salient claim that it makes:

In response to Christ's call for the unity of the church, the Seminary embraces in its life and work a rich racial and ethnic diversity and the breadth of communions represented in the worldwide church.<sup>9</sup>

An interpretation that reduces Christ's call for the unity of the church to anything other than a *radical* embrace of racial and ethnic diversity can succeed only by deception. To deny the *radical* nature of this call is to misunderstand the mission of Christ. A Christocentric vision for achieving unity within diversity must be shaped by the significance of the incarnation.<sup>10</sup> For what better example of a *radical* embracing of the other than God's self embracing human form? Sadly, this institution seems to have substituted Christ's call for a *radical* embrace of racial and ethnic communities with power politics that give privilege to the dominant class, the most powerful groups, and their representatives. The shift from Christ to power politics has rendered Latina/o voices, at best, rare and sporadic, and at worst, nonexistent in the PTS curriculum. Let us begin our discussion of the seminary's academic departments where the crisis of theological education is most pronounced—practical theology.

Courses in the practical theology department explicitly using established insights to address current problems or to advance new answers to old quandaries within the Latina/o community are nonexistent. To my knowledge, never has there been a homiletics, Christian education, or a pastoral care class dedicated to Latina/o styles of preaching, multicultural education, or counseling. A homiletics class that does not take Latina/o mannerisms, verbal aesthetics, length of sermons, and interpretations of scripture into account makes the performance of sermons impotent for the lives of everyday Latinas/os. A Christian education class that is not dedicated to looking through the prism of multiculturalism is ludicrous. Let's face it, guitars and granola bars will not cut it when doing youth ministry in the urban context! Pastoral care that is weak-willed in addressing the psychological effects of racism, internalized oppression, immigration, acculturation, poverty, alienation, *machismo*, *familia* and other Latina/o narratives contradicts its very vision to care for the mind, body, and spirit of parishioners. Though the courses within the practical theology department may be elegant and attractive, they are also in need of alternative research methods, different ways of knowing, and greater cultural sensitivity.

As I see it, when it comes to the inclusion of Latina/o voices, the systematic theology department has both positive and negative aspects. One example of the positive ways in which the department has given much needed attention to Latina/o perspectives may be seen through the classes taught by Mark Taylor, among others. Mark Taylor, an honorary Latino in the eyes of the Latina/o seminary community, has earned this status due to his deep embrace of Latinas/os. This embrace has born much fruit inside the classroom and out. He teaches classes on the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, Cultural Hermeneutics (which this year he is co-teaching with Brian Blount), and Introduction to Systematic Theology (which this year he is co-teaching with Stacy Johnson).<sup>11</sup> All three classes, whether in whole or in part, focus on doing theology *latinamente*.<sup>12</sup> Theology from this point of view helps swing the theological pendulum against the like-minded Anglo-American theologians who dominate it.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, classes like the liberation theology of Gutierrez and Cultural Hermeneutics are electives that are only offered every other year. It is also unfortunate that there is a certain level of flexibility in the curriculum depending on the professors who teach Introduction to Systematic Theology, so that what may be considered culturally relevant systematic theology one year may pale in comparison to the next. Besides this sporadic representation of Latina/o theological perspectives, another negative aspect of the theology department is the vacancy of Latina/o voices within the Seminary's Christian Ethics courses. It hardly seems ethical, not to mention Christian, that Latina/o perspectives have been marginalized from conceptions of proper living. As a result, those things which Latinas/os use as part of their ethical approach, *i.e.* rationality rooted in logic, feelings, traditions, cultural habits, and particular religious convictions, are all but dismissed.<sup>14</sup> Despite the advances of a number of current faculty members, if the theology department is to appropriate Christ's *radical* embrace of racial and ethnic diversity, then it has many holes to fill.

For the Latina/o perspective to be adequately incorporated into the curriculum of the biblical studies department, I would like to see something like what Justo Gonzalez calls "reading the Bible in Spanish."<sup>15</sup> In this area as well, some of our faculty members have shown glimpses of heading in the right direction. For example, I applaud Katharine Doob Sakenfeld's inclusion of *mujerista* biblical interpretation in readings and class discussion for her class entitled, "The Old Testament, Women, and Cultural and Ecclesial Diversity." Brian Blount, too, deserves a high level of

respect for introducing students to Latina/o hermeneutics of Bible interpretation.

However, if the biblical studies department is to accept Christ's *radical* call for racial and ethnic diversity, then it needs to move in at least two directions. First, it must cease placing biblical courses dealing with multiculturalism on the fringes of seminary education as electives. Second, it must hire someone who specializes in inquiring after authentic methods of Latina/o epistemology and exegesis.<sup>16</sup> Given the growing numbers of Latinas/os in the U.S., the biblical studies department must better equip seminarians to skillfully present the Bible in a manner in which everyday Latinas/os can better understand themselves and their situations, for reading the Bible in a way that doesn't make sense of the common experiences of Latinas/os is nonsense.<sup>17</sup>

When it comes to doing theological education *latinamente*, the church history department represents the strongest link in the departmental chain, for it is the scholastic home of the only Latina/o faculty member—Luis Rivera-Pagan. To his credit, every semester he has taught, there have been classes addressing matters of importance to Latinas/os. Anyone who has taken a class with him knows that his presentations of such matters are always highly nuanced and respectful of the various complexities of Latina/o history, culture, and religion. In addition, ever since his recent appointment, he comes to Church History 102 twice a year to discuss salient historical, political, social, and religious trends of Latinas/os.

But doing church history *latinamente* should not mean requiring that task to fall on only one pair of shoulders.<sup>18</sup> Instead, doing church history *latinamente* means that the whole department needs to enforce at least two things. First, the faculty need to be able to retell the past by reversing the perspectives of dominant and myopic histories of those dominant cultures that have oppressed Latinas/os and analyze them from the standpoint of those Latinas/os.<sup>19</sup> Second, the former activity needs to be extended in such a way that will offer theological reflection on the dominant assumptions of elitist discourse.<sup>20</sup> Until then, the following profound and eloquent words of Sandra Maria Esteves will continue to echo in the hearts of Latina/o seminarians at Princeton:

Where is our history?  
What are the names washed down the sewer  
In the septic flood?  
I pray to the rain  
Give me back my rituals  
Give back truth  
Return the remnants of my identity...<sup>21</sup>

To be clear, I am not finding fault with the existing non-Latina/o professors at Princeton Seminary. As it stands, most of them have had very little exposure to the Latina/o ethos that would be necessary to make a big splash in it. Rather, I am speaking the truth to the powers that be in this institution for not hiring the faculty who can give voice to Latina/o theological education, in all its varied guises. With this being said, allow me to pose a question to "those powers that be." What would theological education look like at PTS if it had as many professors with a fetish for doing theology *latinamente* (or multiculturally) as it does for doing theology *a la* Karl Barth? Based on PTS's mission statement, I would say that it would move theological education more in the direction of Christ. Any basis for responding differently would undermine the implications of Christ's call for a *radical* embrace of the other, which the powers that be have already accepted in virtue of PTS's mission statement.

If my sketchy and schematic description of the crisis in theological education has any weight, a full-scale paradigm shift is needed. On this score, Cornel West remarks "The best place to start is with the most delicate and difficult: *the self-images and self-identity of seminary professors.*"<sup>22</sup> Professors organically rooted in the multivalent Latina/o experience set the tone of theological education.<sup>23</sup> Latina/o seminarians will find satisfaction in seeing themselves reflected in Latino/a scholars, and their inclusion into the curriculum will help provide a sense of community and belonging for Latina/o students. Not only will Latina/o students feel a deeper communal connection within the seminary but also outside of it. In addition to this kind of invitation to engage in *latinamente* theological education, to be mentored by Latina/o professors in the same areas of study would provide the "contextual grounding" that Latina/o seminarians need to remain useful to the Latina/o communities they are likely to serve.<sup>24</sup>

Before bringing this reflection to a close, allow me to briefly give word to some concerns I have regarding PTS's broken-winded commitment in recruiting Latina/o professors (an issue that basically boils down to the "elephant in the room" no one wants to admit is there). Given the one hundred and ninety three year history of PTS, the fact that the appointment of the first Latino professor took place only about three years ago concerns me greatly. The relationship between this seminary and Latina/o faculty recruitment concerns me, for I am afraid that it might be another one hundred and ninety years before the seminary hires another Latina/o professor. I'm serious! But, I hope that this institution does not feel that now, after almost a couple of centuries, since it has finally acquired a Latino scholar,

it has reached the *Shangri la* of Latina/o diversity. Although PTS's faculty and its leadership seem to be moving in the right direction, we all must be on our guard in order to avoid the typical racist mindset that Justo Gonzalez describes as welcoming Latinas/os "up to a point then shut[ting] the door."<sup>25</sup> Such an outlook is indicative of viewing diversity as a burden.<sup>26</sup> Seeing further recruitment of Latina/o professors as such often makes the powers that be feel that they have "done" their job.<sup>27</sup> This type of inflation of achievement inevitably leads to tokenism.

Tokenism stands against Christ's *radical* call for the embrace of racial and ethnic diversity. The tokenism at work at PTS represents a political tactic used to give the illusion of genuine efforts to build community. For example, being assigned that one article by a Latina/o scholar, getting that one Latino professor, recruiting that one Latina/o Ph.D. candidate, hiring that one Latino Director of Vocations, or securing that one Latino to sit on that one seat in the Board of Trustees for one year, all represent the sleight of hand of the powers that be that offer a symbolic effort to get a few "minorities" in the mix to give the illusion of multiculturalism.

Benjamin Barber remarks, "That there is a crisis probably does not require demonstration."<sup>28</sup> Barber claims correctly that phrases attached to the term "crisis" appear banal due to the fact that the realities that they highlight are so common. Despite the fact that we are at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, where 35.3 million Latinas/os are living in the U.S., the crisis of theological education in this school has become so common that it practically goes unnoticed by the dominant Anglo-American middle class group. If this group has a deep-seated commitment to the Seminary's mission statement—to the *radical* call of Christ—to embrace racial and ethnic diversity—then it must overcome its cultural, political, and spiritual blindness. The dominant Anglo-American middle class group at the seminary must take a soul plunging self-inventory, a critical self-examination of their own middle-class status, "Ivy League Christianity," and social privilege.<sup>29</sup> If such self examination of the dominant group and of the powers that be does not take place, and if alienation is a form of death, then all the seminarians who died yesterday, will die again today and tomorrow, waiting to have a culturally dignified and relevant theological education.<sup>30</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments: Illuminations of the crisis in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 273.

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic.html>>

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.facsnet.org/issues/faith/espinoza.php>>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Zaida Maldonado Perez, "U.S. Hispanic/Latino Identity and Protestant Experience: A Brief Introduction for the Seminarian," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 7 (Fall 2003), 93.

<sup>7</sup> Zaida Maldonado Perez, "Toward Recruiting And Retaining Latino Students And Faculty: Gauging Commitment," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 5 (Spring 2002), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Orlando O. Espin, "The State of U.S. Latino/a Theology: An Understanding," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* (Fall 2000), 36.

<sup>9</sup> The Princeton Seminary Catalogue, Vol. XXVIII, No. I (July 2004), 31. Emphasis mine.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "A Spirituality for a Multicultural Ministry," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 7 (Fall 2003), 68.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor and Johnson are approaching Systematic Theology this year in a far more contextualized, culturally sensitive and dignified manner as compared to more recent Systematic classes taught by other professors. This is a boon, primarily because it is a core class.

<sup>12</sup> The term *latinamente* is, "A Spanish-language adverb literally meaning 'Latino/a-ly.' Used when something is done in a culturally authentic Latino/a way." (Orlando Espin and H. Miguel, "Glossary," in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1999), 262. Orlando Espin first used the term "Popular Religion as an Epistemology (of suffering)." See *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 2 (1994): 55-78. See also Michelle Gonzales, "Latino/a Theology: Doing Theology, *Latinamente*," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 41 (2002): 70.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel L. Migliore critically writes: "One of the familiar but distressing features of much theological work is that it manages to converse only with itself or with like-minded theologians." Daniel L. Migliore, "Response to Miguel H. Diaz," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 6 (Fall 2002), 31. Here Migliore is responding to Diaz's lecture summarizing his award-winning book on theological anthropology done *latinamente*: Miguel H. Diaz, *On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> See Ismael Garcia, *Dignidad: Ethics Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997) for an extended discussion of moral behavior and ethical reflection constructed from a Latina/o point of view.

<sup>15</sup> Gonzalez's phrase, "reading the Bible in Spanish," means bringing a Latina/o perspective of history and theology when reading the Bible. For a more detailed analysis of the phrase,

see Justo L. Gonzalez, *Manana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 75-87.

<sup>16</sup> Orlando Espin, "U.S. Hispanic/Latino Theology," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 2 (1994), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Justo Gonzalez, *Manana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 87.

<sup>18</sup> For a brief discussion of Latina/o faculty burn-out, see Zaida Maldonado Perez, "Toward Recruiting And Retaining Latino Students And Faculty: Gauging Commitment," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 5 (Spring 2002), 23.

<sup>19</sup> Justo Gonzalez, *Manana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 39.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>21</sup> Sandra Maria Esteves, "It is Raining Today," in *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings—An Anthology*, edited by Roberto Santiago (New York: Ballantine Books One World, 1995), 19.

<sup>22</sup> West, 276.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 276-7.

<sup>24</sup> Edwin I. Hernandez, "From Sacred Tower to Beacon of Hope: Opening Institutional Doors to Foster Hispanic Theological Education," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 5 (Spring 2002), 22.

<sup>25</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *Manana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 41.

<sup>26</sup> Zaida Maldonado Perez, "Toward Recruiting And Retaining Latino Students And Faculty: Gauging Commitment," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 5 (Spring 2002), 22.

<sup>27</sup> Edwin I. Hernandez "From Sacred Tower to Beacon of Hope: Opening Institutional Doors to Foster Hispanic Theological Education," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 5 (Spring 2002), 22.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University Of California Press, 1984), xx.

<sup>29</sup> West, 272.

<sup>30</sup> I would like to thank the following people for their support in writing this reflection: Matilde Moros, Amaury Tanon-Santos, Jose Gonzalez, Renn J. Turner, and Cornel West. I am in your debt.

## Continuing the Conversation: Rethinking Evaluative Criteria and Student-Professor Expectations

by Christiane Lang

Last semester, I wrote a paper whose topic had captured my imagination and which kept me at my computer for days. I finished the paper and turned it in, certain that I had composed the most coherent, compelling project of my seminary career. As far as I know, the professor teaching the course at least glanced at my work, since grades have been returned and I passed. However, my paper seems to have drifted into a professorial black hole, its only remaining evidence now a letter grade on a piece of carbon paper from the registrar.

Evidently, the professor and I had different purposes in mind for that project. For the professor, my work seems to have been the basis for a final nod of evaluation, proof that thoughts had occurred to me in class. For me, the paper was my opportunity to engage ideas for the sake of a larger conversation, of which one participant was the professor. With disappointment, I mentioned the situation to a number of students, all of whom smiled knowingly and, with disturbingly unanimous resignation, expressed that they did not expect much better. Certainly, I have experienced much

better teaching than that at the seminary, but the scenario is nothing new. Usually, the answer one receives in response to a complaint about delayed grades or unreturned work has to do with the busyness of professors, a point I do not dispute.

It would be easy to begin faulting various pressures that keep professors busy, but that would be to miss the larger issue. We work within an academic and evaluative system in which the arguments that students develop in final projects are officially bracketed by a grading method that suggests that the conversation is unreal or insignificant, an empty exercise to be tossed away at term's end. Further, it is a system in which evaluation depends primarily on scholars who wield, along with the power to stimulate further reflection, the power to formally approve or disapprove of students' ideas.

Such power can cut short further conversation and undermine students' own abilities to critically assess and refine their own work. I think of the scores of students I have heard remark, "I don't know how I did in that class last semester." By that they mean that they do not know what letter grade a professor assigned. Students have learned not to judge their own performance in a class, but to rely on the assessment of a professor who reads the end product of the student's solitary reflection. *This is why it is insufficient to blame professors' busy lives for late papers and missing feedback; the problem is a larger one of sufficient*

*evaluative criteria and shared accountability for student performance.*

Further, it is a problem of interpersonal disconnection. Intense development and evaluation of ideas at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) is often moved out of the classroom and into the solitude of finals week and the professor's grading period. One might reason that PTS has precepts, which provide opportunities for students to engage one another's thoughts in conversation. Yet the expectations for student participation in precepts are minimal. Partial thoughts can be shared and sometimes nurtured, which is essential work, but articulated, sustained arguments are reserved for lengthy papers written for the eyes of the professor alone, whose evaluation, rather than continuing the semester's conversation, can ultimately end the dialogue. The role of the classroom community in listening and responding to individuals' developed arguments is often missing, which suggests that the classroom is not a successfully preparatory place for future academics and pastors who will function in interpersonal contexts and decision-making bodies.

Educational processes that eliminate this shared aspect of intellectual endeavors are entirely common. Still, we would hardly call effective an academic professional who wrote but who never published her work or appeared on public lecture circuits. We would not deem effective a pastor who never presented his ideas to the congregation and listened for responses. Yet we are content to label students "successful" who "prove" their learning in classes by the submission of term papers that might be read once, if at all, by a professor, who can respond by summarily jotting down a single letter long after the course has ended.

Such a scenario is so familiar to us as not to seem bizarre. Moved into another setting—a public debate, let's say—such a response would seem absurd. If a politician made a case for a course of action and his hearers responded with months of silence and then pronounced letters of the alphabet in terse assessment, we would be confused, if not appalled. Of course, we think that politicians' ideas matter, since politicians are powerful and their proposals can be implemented as policy.

And that is just the point. Students do not view themselves as having significant educational power, and most of their ideas are not seen as important. Their work is play-acting, their conversations mere private exercises. But, I would insist, students' ideas do matter, now and in the future. More to the point, students' experiences of how value is assigned to ideas, whether democratically, in constructive dialogue and debate, or otherwise, makes a tremendous difference in how those

students will provide leadership in the church and the academy.

When we create classroom environments that make one person, the professor, into the arbiter of intellectual value, and in which that person is not *required* to justify his or her judgments on others' work, we create an unjust learning environment. It is unjust in that designated authority, rather than the power of reasoning, determines the outcome of the conversation. It is unjust in that some people's ideas can be ranked without criteria or ranked according to criteria set solely by the person who has the power of position and expertise. It is unjust, and certainly counterproductive to the goals of the church and the academy, that student work can be assessed unilaterally without space for a response.

Of course, the problematic approach to teaching that I have been describing has its benefits. First, the abstraction of evaluation of student work from the classroom into the professor's office avoids the problem of peer-induced anxiety. If students know that their most careful arguments will not see the light of day, they can afford to take more intellectual risks and perhaps engage in more creative thinking. Second, unilateral evaluation by the professor can be relatively simple and quick, especially if the professor feels no special compulsion to justify his or her decision to the student. Third, final graded projects created in scholarly solitude can allow students to synthesize their knowledge, a process that benefits them even if they are not in contact with other students or the professor. Fourth, class sizes can be larger when a lively conversation with many participants is not desired or expected.

But all of these supposed benefits can also contribute to intellectual isolation, destructive criticism of others' ideas, and disconnection from the community of thinking pastors and scholars. An approach that requires most student work to be done in isolation and that evaluates student progress individualistically and privately builds on an epistemological foundation that Mary Field Belenky and her colleagues have termed "separate knowing." Separate knowing requires doubt, critical discourse, and self-extrication, while "connected knowing" relies upon empathy, trust, forbearance with new ideas, and collaboration.

At their best, both ways of knowing allow for the exchange of ideas in dialogue, but it is "connected knowing" that allows for the development of people and their new ideas in community.<sup>1</sup> As Belenky and her colleagues point out, learning environments that preclude personal connection or limit the nurture of ideas toward undetermined conclusions will inhibit the

creativity and growth of many students. Further, it seems apparent that methods of teaching and evaluation that regard student work as the impersonal product of objective minds or that do not acknowledge the interpersonal context will be damaging, rather than helpful, to students who learn best through interpersonal connection, rather than separation.

The assumption with which I am working is as follows: *positive student learning will increase as students feel more connected to and invested in their own educational process. Such connection and investment occurs best when the interpersonal context of education is appreciated, when power relationships are equitable, and when the explicitly desired outcomes of a class are flexible for each learner and somewhat democratically determined.* Accordingly, when students feel disconnected from their educational process because their ideas are not honored, because those in power over them have limited accountability, or because their work will be assessed by criteria external to their own concerns, student morale atrophies and learning suffers.

I want to be very clear here that I am not accusing professors at the seminary of being autocratic power-mongers or of being indifferent to student learning. In my experience, most scholars here wish also to be good teachers, and they care about their students. Further, a number of professors consciously use their authority to structure their classes to maximize student participation and growth, to encourage ongoing dialogue between students, and nurture an equitable classroom environment. Such teachers are appreciated immensely.

However, in order for PTS to become an institution that truly prepares its students for conversation in the church and the academy, more widespread changes must be encouraged and implemented. First, although it is true that students are at a disadvantage in any evaluative process, students at PTS, who are all adults capable of decision-making, are not powerless. Far too often, students who sense unjust classroom dynamics will not speak up, perhaps out of fear of negative consequences or out of apathy, and they prefer to complain to each other rather than deal with problems straightforwardly. I have observed whole classrooms of students remain silent when a professor has not defined terms, has not provided a break, or worse, has unknowingly insulted a student or a group of people. The respect that students rightly owe to professors far too easily slides into obsequiousness, cowardice, or fear that eventually leads to silent contempt. Positively, I have also seen students stake a claim in their own education and request format changes in classes or assignments that would be helpful to them, changes

which professors are almost always glad to accommodate. A first reminder then is to students, myself included: we are members of the academic and church communities, and our thoughts and needs can and should be expressed within the classroom. The equity of classroom environments here depends partly upon us and our willingness to speak up.

Second, and this is pointed more toward the administration and faculty; methods of evaluation and assessment here at PTS can be rethought. We need to recognize that the outcomes of classes will relate to more than a particular subject matter, and we should honor growth that cannot be tested in traditional ways. In *The Educational Imagination*, Elliot Eisner describes a “trichotomy” of the kinds of outcomes that might be realized in a classroom: “subject-specific,” “student-specific,” and “teacher-specific.”<sup>2</sup> Achievement testing attends to subject-specific outcomes; the multiple-choice test at the end of Church History 101 is subject-specific. Subject-specific outcomes are often the primary concern of term grades.

Student-specific outcomes have to do with what a student might learn in a class that is not specifically about the subject the professor has been teaching, including interdisciplinary discoveries or changes in opinion on issues never discussed in class. Eisner refers to “personalized learning” and “idiosyncratic outcomes” and recognizes that the methods to evaluate such outcomes will be flexible and less comparative. He suggests “interviews, open-ended essays, and projects whose parameters provide opportunities for students to reveal what personal meanings they have constructed for themselves.”<sup>3</sup> Eisner’s “student-specific” outcomes can be further elaborated by Belenky’s concern for how personal meanings are constructed within a connected interpersonal context; in evaluating a student, we might consider the role she played in the class community. Evaluation of the quality of a student’s discourse in the classroom is possible, but it involves nuanced appreciation for diverse conversational styles that affect how students ask questions, advance arguments, and listen to others.

Eisner also discusses teacher-specific student learning outcomes that can be evaluated, and he notes:

The intellectual style the teacher displays, the standards that he or she upholds, the willingness to take risks, the tolerance for nonconformity, the type of precision and punctuality he or she values: these aspects of the teacher as a person are not necessarily trivial aspects of teaching. Indeed, because these features are likely to be more pervasive than the content studied, it might be that

they have important consequences for what students learn.<sup>4</sup>

The evaluation of teacher-specific outcomes seems the most difficult and perhaps the most anxiety-producing for students, professors, and administrators. Yet if we believe that in seminary we learn from people who are called to the ministry of study and teaching, and if we know that the modeling of professors has a major impact on student development, then some acknowledgement of this process seems justified. Further, it seems fair to say that we already implicitly grade students on teacher-based outcomes. In my own experience, students who learn quickly to use the professor's vocabulary and mode of communication, who exhibit similar approaches to life and school, and who write toward the teacher's own style, are viewed as promising in the professor's field and are more apt to receive an "A" (for Adaptability?). Perhaps we simply need to become more conscious of the ways that teacher-specific expectations tacitly guide the assessment of student work at the end of the term in order to prevent nonconforming students from being punished. In any case, ignoring such dynamics is not helpful.

Recognizing Eisner's trichotomy of outcomes is not enough. We need also to make the process of establishing assessment criteria more democratic and less oriented toward the evaluative power of solitary experts. A possible model includes allowing students, individually or in groups, to co-write their syllabus with the professor at the beginning of the term, agreeing upon the categories by which students wish to be judged at term's end and assigning relative percentage value to projects. Asking such questions as "What would it look like for me to have success in this class?" "What would prove that I had grown as a person and as a learner/teacher in this class?" and "In what projects would I most like to invest my time this semester?" can be helpful starting places.

Related to this issue, professors should be encouraged to respond to student ideas with more ideas. *When the focus of a teacher's response to student work shifts from replying in kind to assigning a grade, the conversation stops and students' thoughts are not honored.* Given time constraints, many teachers are hesitant to give significant responses to student work. One model that is sensitive to teacher workload is that which asks students to write one-page reflections each week to share with fellow students and then refine several weeks' worth of material for handing to the teacher. The teacher can expect a higher level of reflection in the reworked paper and respond with a greater degree of complexity.

Not only should professors be encouraged to respond to student ideas with more ideas, but they should also be held accountable for giving a written or in-person explanation for the final grade a student receives in a course. Such an explanation can be brief and to the point, but it must relate the student's performance to criteria that the student understands in advance. At the end of the term, students evaluate professors on a form that attends to diverse criteria, and professors eventually have access to student comments. However, students may have no idea what the grade book of the professor looks like and do not understand on what basis a professor assigned a C rather than a B. Especially given the availability of electronic resources like Blackboard, which provides for the posting of assignment grades, and e-mail, which allows for professors to contact students easily and instantly, the task of justifying evaluative decisions should not be onerous.

Further, we might pay attention the 360-feedback loop model found in the business world, in which workers assess themselves by standards they have agreed to, hear fellow workers' assessments, and meet with a supervisor over the course of the year. When that worker sees an evaluative progress report, she is not surprised at how it reads, since she has been in conversation about her contributions all along. Obviously, this model should not be unreflectively mapped onto academic life. Still, it points to a missing element in our own evaluative methods: fellow students have no input. Yet students' own learning either benefits or suffers from their fellow students' preparation or lack thereof. Students have a stake in their classmates' learning and work, so some degree of responsibility in evaluating that work seems appropriate, if revolutionary.

Such student involvement is perhaps less frightening if we place it within the context of ongoing class projects. A number of classes involve group projects, which often result in one student doing the lion's share of work. This is hardly connected or collaborative learning. A more helpful model is one in which students self-elect to belong to work groups that decide the group's standards in advance. Students then write and share position papers with their groups in order to refine arguments, draw out conclusions, and enrich others' papers. Such papers are composed over time, in community, and in view of partnering learners who can then fairly contribute to the evaluation of their fellow students' work. One benefit of this approach is that professors are more likely to receive well-articulated, clean papers when they have been read and reread by multiple students. Another benefit is that

students will have a sense of how they “did” in a class when the process of evaluation is spread out over time and shared among various stakeholders. A third advantage of such work groups is that students learn to view their own work more judiciously, since they are engaged in evaluative processes along the way.

Finally, for the kind of collaborative, democratic, and connected educational environment I envision, classes must be made to work on smaller scales. Precepts are a good start, but far too many of them still involve more than 10 students, and the seminar classes here are so large as to be intimidating. In such settings, the in-class conversation among students shrinks, because fewer people are willing to speak up. Delayed grades and unreturned papers are clearly related to class size, since professors understandably take weeks to get through grading a hundred papers. Reducing class size is a complicated and expensive goal, and I do not pretend to know how it will be accomplished, but I know that student learning would benefit from its attainment. In the meantime, many professors of large classes already provide for some small-group discussion in class and make themselves available for one-on-one conversations with students.

*By attending more carefully in the future to the interpersonal power dynamics of the classroom and by*

*concerning ourselves with a diversity of student outcomes as we evaluate and assess, we can enhance the complexity and richness of the conversation on our campus.* As students learn to think, reflect, qualify, and evaluate in community, they can become more adept leaders, academics, and pastors. This will take courage from students, faculty, and administrators, since many changes, both grass-roots and institutional, need to be implemented. However, the kinds of connecting activities I have mentioned are community building and, beyond benefiting the seminary’s constituent members in the future, would support PTS as it is now.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mary Field Belenky, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Basic Books, 1997), 122.

<sup>2</sup> Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination* (Merrill Prentice Hall, 2002), 184-186.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Our Academic Act of Worship

by Michael Gross

“There is no mistake more terrible than to suppose that activity in Christian work can take the place of depth of Christian affections.”<sup>1</sup> This statement by Benjamin B. Warfield points to an ironic danger that we must be aware of when pursuing a seminary education. In seminary, we could be making ourselves much more like the Scribes and Pharisees who would not listen to Jesus than the lowly disciples who gave up everything to follow him. We join the small category of the educated elite when we receive our masters degrees, let alone our PhDs. In any academic environment it would be easy to minimize this fact, just as the rich often consider themselves to be middle-class in view of those who are even more affluent than they are. Of course it would be incorrect to devalue a theological education altogether, but at the very least, this irony serves to warn us that we must always be mindful of our focus. If we are not, there are two dangers that can arise: first, we might objectify God by making Him an object to be studied to the exclusion of our personal

relationship with Him; second, we might separate our spiritual lives from our academic lives. At best, the result will be to miss out on the joy we could have in Christ. At worst, we might be deceived and become “enemies of the cross of Christ.” This will not likely happen, I submit, if we pursue every academic endeavor as an act of worship.

Is there any need to go further? Does not every person who pursues a seminary education understand this? Perhaps it is known, but is it practiced? I would love to believe that we all know exactly where our focus ought to be and are able to lead lives that show it, but I am not fully convinced. I, for one, often struggle with these two tendencies. It is a constant discipline for me to keep the “big picture” in focus as I engage in my academic endeavors. *When I ask other seminarians about their spiritual lives, I often hear of many spiritual challenges. For better or for worse, a seminary education inevitably leads to spiritual challenges. Our hearts will be revealed through the way we meet these challenges.*

For the first few years of my Christian life, I equated spiritual growth with intellectual growth. I knew that knowledge was not the means to salvation

(someone had even told me about Gnosticism), but I assumed that those who pursued theological knowledge were motivated by faith and, as a natural result of their study, became more faithful. It was not until I wrote a paper on Dietrich Bonhoeffer that I realized this was not always the case.

Bonhoeffer was a man who excelled in his understanding of theology and yet was motivated by academic ambitions rather than faith. He became a bold and faithful person later in life, but his ambitions long preceded what he saw as his conversion. “I had not yet become a Christian...I turned the doctrine of Jesus Christ into something of personal advantage for myself...I had never prayed, or prayed only very little.”<sup>2</sup> It was not until five or six years after finishing his theological dissertation that he became a truly committed Christian!

My encounter with Bonhoeffer led to many thoughts about what constitutes the pursuit of theological knowledge and what constitutes spiritual growth. If the former is possible with neglect to the latter, is the converse true?

The answer came in two very powerful ways. I spent three months at the Taizé community in France, and there I saw spiritual growth rooted in profound simplicity. My degree in theology seemed small and paltry next to the life commitment these Christians had made. Their growth was not attained through paper writing and exam taking, but rather through daily prayer, contemplation, and scripture reading. The result of this growth has influenced thousands of people throughout the world. Their songs can be heard in the most distant places. Within this context, I began to wonder if I had been studying God more than experiencing Him.

Before I had time to fully comprehend this new means of spiritual growth, I found myself working with locals at an orphanage in Guatemala. Again, my degree in theology proved to be a small stamp of authenticity next to these spiritual giants who prayed like warriors and gave their lives to saving children. Though they did not know their “-isms” as well as I did, their lives exhibited far more devotion.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that contrary to popular (Western) belief, intellectual knowledge is not inherently good. Knowledge is indeed powerful, but as our last century has clearly shown, such power can be used either for great good or for great evil. Perhaps the degree to which it can be used for good is proportional to the degree to which it can be used for evil. If this is true, having a lot of knowledge is perhaps similar to having a lot of money—that is,

dangerous. Could this also apply to theological knowledge?

The seven months that I spent outside of the United States showed me that the pursuit of intellectual growth is only one means of attaining spiritual growth. The thought had even briefly crossed my mind that, after earning my degree from Pharisees, I now had a chance to learn from Disciples. Yet there were some amazing professors that I had studied under who seemed to approach theology in a profoundly spiritual way. Rather than dismissing academia as an insufficient means of growth, I realized that I had not laid hold of its full potential. I eagerly filled out my seminary applications, knowing that great challenges and amazing growth awaited me.

*These experiences have helped me see two great challenges intrinsic to a seminary education. First, there is the tendency to objectify God. Theology sometimes tries to make Him an object to be studied, understood, and explained.* If this is not obvious by looking at a typical seminary curriculum, cafeteria conversations will surely reveal how readily we speak objectively, and how seldom we speak subjectively, about God. This challenge is not new. One hundred and seventy-six years ago, Charles Hodge warned Princeton Seminary students to “beware of unhallowed speculations on sacred subjects.”<sup>3</sup> Looking at God objectively is not *inherently* bad. However, it is as potentially deadly as it is potentially glorious!

*The second challenge of a seminary education is the tendency to separate our academic lives from our spiritual lives.* I hear evidence of this great divide when people speak of grades as if they were the great reward of their efforts. I seldom hear people speak with genuine excitement about writing a theology paper or taking a New Testament exam. Academics are, for many, a burden bereft of joy rather than a gateway for immense joy. This tendency of separation is so strong that some seminaries today are trying to incorporate spiritual formation into their curriculum. This is an excellent idea, but it can lead to compromised academic standards.

There is a way of living that meets these challenges with such power as cannot be expressed with words. We must live in constant worship. The Westminster Shorter Catechism states that our chief end “is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” This means that worship is not only singing songs or reciting liturgy. Our chief end, our purpose, is to glorify God with everything. The result will be profound: eternal joy.

Every action must be included in our worship. Paul writes, “so, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you

do, do everything for the glory of God.”<sup>4</sup> This familiar verse must find fulfillment in our lives if we are to be who God wants us to be! It is not a call for perfectionism. This is a description of the motivation of our lives and the focus of our actions. Paul makes it explicitly clear in Philippians 3:12-13 that perfection is a process. Every action can become worship if it is conducted with a focus on the glorification of God. As a result, we will be transformed.

What happens when we act without a focus on glorifying God? What will our lives say? Perhaps we need to discover what our chief end truly is. What makes us tick? What makes us pursue goals? What makes us study? There are only two possible answers: either we live to glorify God or we live to glorify ourselves! This applies to every action, even amoral ones such as eating. Everything must be done for the glory of God. In other words, everything must be an act of worship. There is no middle ground here, no balance, no Aristotelian mean. When it comes to glorifying God with our lives, we must be either hot or cold.

If we think of theological study as worship, it is clear how God is glorified. God is glorified when we desire to learn about Him. This is no different in human relationships. When I ask where people are from, I am showing interest in them and thereby honoring them. Likewise, learning how God has revealed Himself through scripture and history, wrestling with the difficult paradoxes and tensions of this revelation and every other subject of a seminary education honors God. This is a particular and glorious form of worship!

Yet we must be careful. I would be mistaken if I claimed to know people that I meet after simply learning some facts about them. This would not be honoring them at all. Rather, it would show that my initial interest was not genuine. Furthermore, if I *complained* about learning these facts, they would be dishonored. This is how the first challenge of a seminary education, the tendency to objectify God, can be deadly. If we think we know God simply because we know theology, we are mistaken and likely to miss out on a vibrant relationship with God. Our impersonal and objective focus will kill our relationship with God, just as it would kill a relationship with another person! Therefore, let us allow what we learn about God to deepen our relationship with God. By so doing, we will be able to meet the first challenge.

If we worship God through our pursuit of theological knowledge, we will also be prepared to meet the second challenge. There will be no desire to separate our academic lives from our spiritual lives because we will see how good it is to glorify God with our academic efforts. The pursuit of theological

knowledge will no longer be a means to an end; it will be a joy-giving, spirit-deepening, God-gloryifying end in itself! We will no longer concern ourselves with the minimum requirements for the grade we hope to earn. Instead, we will see that working for a grade is the same as working to glorify ourselves, that our GPA can be a means to puff ourselves up and drown in the sea of “selfish ambition and conceit.”

One might think it is responsible to focus on grades. It is far more responsible, however, to focus on glorifying God. Is not working for God loftier than working for a letter? Instead of writing a paper to earn a grade, we should write to prepare an offering for God! Who would not do a better job with this in mind? Our efforts will be greater because we will see the true value in them. And while doing better, we will also be liberated from anxiety, knowing that we should not curse the limits we were created with, but rather do the best we can out of love for our Creator.

The focus of our pursuits in seminary will reveal much about our character and our faith. How do we maintain a focus on God? What will prevent us from slipping back into our objectification and separation tendencies? Though there may be many answers to these questions, I will propose two. We must be a people rooted in prayer, and we must live in a community of worship.

It continually amazes me how much of a struggle it is to be disciplined in prayer. This is nothing new in some ways, except of course that we are now seminary students pursuing a lifetime of vocational pastoral and academic ministry. There is no activity more humble than prayer. Prayer fully admits our limitations and our conviction that God is the source of all that is good.<sup>5</sup> Wisdom and growth come from God alone. As the giver of all good things, God could choose to grant more growth from one single prayer than from a thousand books carefully read. Of course, God often chooses to use books, lectures, classes, experiences, and relationships to teach us, but if we pursue these things apart from God, we will only grow in pride and arrogance.

We should honestly examine our lives to see how much they are characterized by prayer. If we think we are growing and yet are not rooted in prayer, it could be that we have lost what matters most. Prayer grounds us in the source of Truth while nurturing our relationship with the Giver of Truth. How can we objectify God if we spend time every day enjoying the relationship we have with Him through the deep communion of prayer? Worship will come naturally to us. I believe these convictions led Brother Roger, the founder of the Taizé

Community in France, to write that “nothing is more responsible than to pray.”<sup>6</sup>

If prayer and a focus on God characterize our individual lives, those around us will naturally be encouraged. In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer writes that the goal of a Christian community is to “meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation.”<sup>7</sup> This is a gift of grace that keeps the individual members of the community reminded of and accountable to the focus and purpose of life — glorifying God. Let us not stop bringing the message to one another because we think we already know it well enough! He goes on to write that “seminarians before their ordination receive the gift of common life with their brethren for a definite period.”<sup>8</sup> Do we see our community as a gift? Does it encourage us to glorify God in everything we do, including our academic pursuits? The health of a community is related to the health of its individual members. Our “personal lives” affect one another, for good or for bad. If we lay hold of the opportunities a seminary community provides, doing our part to make it a community of worship and not solely an academic community, we will find it easier to maintain a focus on God. Our academics will become acts of worship because we are encouraged and held accountable in maintaining a focus on glorifying God as the chief end of our lives.

These challenges are intrinsic to a seminary education. Ninety-four years ago, Benjamin B. Warfield spoke to Princeton Theological Seminary students about the challenges of a seminary education. These challenges are the same ones we face today. The solution is also the same. He declared: “...you must keep the fires of your religious life burning brightly in your heart; in the inmost core of your being, you must be men of God...There is no mistake more terrible than to suppose that activity in Christian work can take the place of depth of Christian affections...Are you, by this constant contact with divine things, growing in holiness, becoming more and more men of God? If not, you are hardening!”<sup>9</sup>

*A seminary education provides great potential for spiritual growth and, at the same time, great potential for spiritual hardening. In order to lay hold of growth,*

*we must seek to glorify God joyfully with our whole lives. Every detail of a seminary education, every paper written, every book read, must be an academic act of worship. With this God-centered focus, we will be prepared to face the spiritual challenges intrinsic to a seminary education. God will be glorified, not objectified. Our lives will be fully committed to glorifying God, not separated into categories. If this is what we want, we must get on our knees every day and be people of prayer, acknowledging our need for God. We must also acknowledge our need for community and accept the great gift that surrounds us at seminary, doing our part to make it a community of worship.*

*Michael Gross is an M.Div. junior at Princeton Theological Seminary.*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Religious Life of Theological Students,” in *The Princeton Theology*, ed. Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 266.

<sup>2</sup> Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*. Rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 204-205.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Hodge, “Lecture to Theology Students,” in *The Princeton Theology*, ed. Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 113.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. 10:31.

<sup>5</sup> James 1:16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Brother Roger, “Letter from Taizé: A Future of Peace,” (Unpublished correspondence: January, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>9</sup> Warfield, 265-266.

# FINALE

## Our Word-World

*by Jack Brace*

A few years ago, before coming to Princeton to work toward a Master of Divinity, I read a life-changing essay by Eugene Peterson, former professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent Seminary and author of many volumes including the now-popular *Message*. In this essay, entitled *The Seminary as a Place for Spiritual Formation*, Peterson reflects on what he calls the “word-world” of the seminary, arguing “Seminary does not provide the *materials* for spiritual formation, but a particular *condition* in which the formation takes place for a relatively short period of time.”<sup>1</sup> This condition, Peterson argues, “has to do with the ‘Word made flesh,’ the *Logos* which Jesus Christ incarnated...this is what the seminary is charged to do; honor and understand, teach and consider this *Logos*. ”<sup>2</sup>

Yet Peterson, himself a longtime seminary professor, recognizes the frequent collision between God’s Word and the many other “good words” in the seminary. He knows the mess that exegesis, preaching, and systematic theology are prone to make of this *Logos* in their very attempt to understand and appreciate it. He understands the “frequent and dismaying experience of alienation” that occurs here in the seminary. Yet Peterson is convinced that the seminary is precisely the place that we, as faithful followers of Jesus Christ, are charged to deeply consider and make sense of God’s *Logos*. In short, the fundamental condition the seminary is called to foster is one that ultimately lead its members—students, spouses, staff, administration, and faculty—as well as, and perhaps even more importantly, the watching world, into a profound sense of God’s presence. The seminary must ultimately seek to worship the living God in spirit and truth.

To this end, Peterson looks to the desert father Evagrius Ponticus, noting his use of the term *logismos* in opposition to the *Logos*. *Logismos*, Evagrius argues, is “a thought that gets separated from the *Logos* and more or less takes on a life of its own, going its own way, doing its own thing” causing one to become “befogged” and “besotted.”<sup>3</sup> Put simply, these “words” are white noise—static signals that profoundly inhibit our ability to hear and to see, to sense, the Word. Any number of these *logismos* are broadcast in the seminary. Certainly there are empty words, words with no precise *telos*, that seem to drift and cause us to drift as well. Such words are to be expected at any institution. Yet as

noted, there are also many “good words” in the seminary; words proclaimed with deep conviction and certainty, in the classroom, from the pulpit, and in the many books that compete for valuable space on already overfull shelves.

However, it is important to remember, especially in regard to these “good” words, that they are ultimately *logismos*. The only way for one to avoid their “besetting,” argues Evagrius, is by the *knowledge of God*. Of note is Evagrius’ concept of knowledge, which is knowledge involving the whole self—mind, body, and soul. This is physically active, deeply spiritual, fundamentally interconnected knowledge. It is knowledge so complete and deep that to grasp it with the mind alone would be impossible. Therein is the rub. We fundamentally cannot ascent to knowledge of God. Instead, such knowledge involves submission of our entire self to God. It is the confession of faith, “I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). The implication here is that **all knowledge must lead to or become prayer to God** if it is to issue in a proper understanding and honor of God. To *know* God one must be *obedient* to God, obedience involving the submission of these *logismos* to God.

The Roman Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen’s brief reflection on *obedience* may help flesh out this point. Exploring the Latin root of obedience (*audire*), which means “to hear,” Nouwen argues that one must listen to God if one is going to move from the *absurd* (deaf) life to the *audire* (obedient) life. Such a posture of listening, of pure obedience to God, was the fundamental character of Jesus’ life. Jesus was, Nouwen argues, “always listening to the Father, always attentive to his voice, always alert for his directions. Jesus was ‘all ear.’ That is true prayer: being all ear for God.”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, knowledge becomes worship through a careful discipline of listening to the Word of God. There is no other way. Not speaking, not reading, not preaching, not listening to the many other “good” words here in seminary, including the many good words offered in this issue of *The Princeton Theological Review*. We can all certainly learn from them, be challenged by them, and understand new things because of their unique insights as we seek the renewal of the seminary. But these “good” words are

not the Word. Each of these words, insofar as they are directing us to worship God, must be obediently submitted to God. There can be no other way for us to know God's Word made flesh.

I said at the beginning of this short reflection that Peterson's insights were life-changing. Indeed, they were. They were a catalyst for my coming to Princeton. They have also been a constant source of correction and encouragement as I have made my way through our M.Div. curriculum. But I recognize that they have only been a springboard for pondering that Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. I have only "survived" here at Princeton because each and every word that I have heard has found its home in prayer; listening prayer—prayer that is attentive, watchful, and eager to see and hear God. This, at least, has been the goal, a goal I have admittedly fallen short of time and again.

Despite these frequent shortfalls, prayer has continually anchored me. It has been an anchor for those books I have read such as Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, which I am sure has elicited not too infrequent prayer from many students alike. In fact, prayer must anchor even the Bible, the inspired witness to the revealed Word of God. Without the anchor of prayer, through which God speaks to us and guides us,

even Scripture runs the risk of "befogging" us. Prayer has further been an anchor for lectures and lunchtime conversations, which often put meat on the bones of what I read and ponder in solitude, but which too are essentially *logismos*. In these and many other places, submitting words and thoughts, ideas and passion to prayer, has been a life-changing discipline. Indeed, Prayer is the condition that the seminary provides, the condition that leads us, all of us, into life-transforming knowledge of God.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, "The Seminary as a Place of Spiritual Formation," in *Subversive Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Vancouver B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 1997), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 58-9.

<sup>4</sup> Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Making All Things New* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 67-68.

